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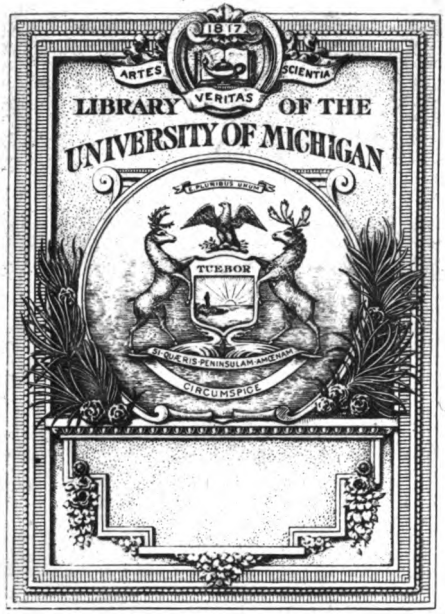

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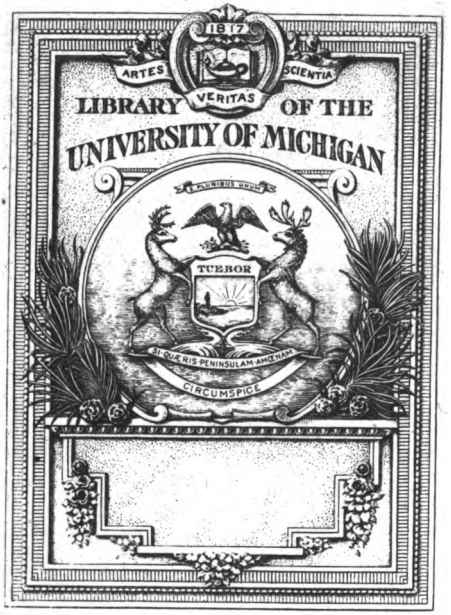

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'Blackwood'
Tales from the Outposts

X

SHIKAR

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Edited by
Lieut.-Colonel L. A. Bethell

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Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine

'Blackwood' Tales from the Outposts

X

SHIKAR

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SHIKAR

I.

THE FINEST SPORT IN THE WORLD.

To my mind there is no sport equal to galloping down lions. From the moment the quarry is afoot till he is dead there is no cessation of excitement. The first sight of the stealthily moving animal sets the pulses tingling, and the race over country after him stirs the blood as no stalk can possibly do. There is a considerable element of danger; but we are all agreed with Egerton Warburton's views on that score, and the danger arises far more often from carelessness than any other cause.

For the avoidance of mishap, first, and most important, is the horse. He must be a fairly good one, with plenty of pluck and a turn of speed, not necessarily be accustomed to lion-hunting, though you may take more liberties when riding an animal that understands the business and in which you have confidence. The great essential in the untrained horse is that he must not be gun-shy—he *must* stand steady while his rider shoots from the saddle or close by. After the horse comes the saddlery. It is of the greatest moment that every item of the gear be perfectly sound and reliable, as it is subjected to strain on occasion, and should anything give way while you are mounting in a hurry, there is fair chance of a mauling. One cannot be too careful. I have known a case where

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the horse swerved violently from a charging lion, and the girth broke, throwing saddle and rider to the ground. The lion first gave chase to the horse ; but unfortunately the man, half-stunned, rose to his feet, and at once the lion turned upon him. He was terribly injured, and nothing but his wonderful pluck and a strong constitution pulled him through. As it was, the results left him more or less crippled for life.

The bit should be a severe one, as you must have the fullest control over your mount at all times, and good sharp spurs are also necessary. When a lion is lying down, and one is 'fooling around,' trying to find and lure him into the open, you must ride, 'with one spur buried, the other half in,' as it were ; at all events you must have your horse, his hind legs well under him, ready to jump off, fully extended, in an instant. The rifle may be anything you can comfortably carry. I always use the little .256 made for me by Westley Richards, and find it quite good enough. If you have a second mounted gun-bearer, let him carry your heavier rifle ; it may come in useful.

As regards gun-bearers, at least one must be mounted ; and he must be a good horseman, as he has to follow you over any sort of ground at top speed. I seldom carry a rifle myself when riding after a lion, as I like to be free to get the most out of the horse, and my gun-bearer comes behind with the gun. When this plan is adopted, one must carry a revolver, and a big bore at that. Till lately I have always used a long-barrelled .45 Colt in an open holster, and more than once it has saved me from accident. Latterly I have become a convert to the new Colt automatic. I have not yet had an opportunity of putting this weapon to practical test, but feel sure it will serve its purpose even better than my old friend, as it has far greater penetration than the revolver.

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Now for work in the field. Let us suppose that we have two or three lions in sight, and in fairly open country. First we take a look at our game, and then make an eye survey of the country to try and determine the 'point' they are likely to make, and the character of the ground over which the gallop may take us. This is most important. Above all things, we *never follow where we cannot see the game;* and bad ground—soft or rough—where it would be impossible to gallop, must be avoided.

Away we go as hard as the horses can lay hoof to ground. The lions see us, stand to watch for a moment, then head for their pet cover. Knowing the district, we can guess the refuge they have in their minds' eye, and can form a pretty good idea of the place where they should be brought to bay. As often as not the lion will gallop a little at starting, but he soon changes his pace for the trot, at which he can travel for many miles. It behoves us, therefore, to push them hard from the very beginning and force them again into that gallop which so soon tires them. We also score heavily if we ride directly behind them. Animals, like men, fear most the danger they cannot see. A lion cannot see a pursuer directly in his rear, and when on the run cannot turn his head far to the side to look round; hence if he wants to look at us he must stop and turn, whereby we gain ground.

If there is no cover for some considerable distance, we do not press too close, but content ourselves with keeping the troop at the gallop. At the same time we keep a most careful look-out, lest any of them drop out of sight. It frequently happens that an old female is the first to resent pursuit, and stops to 'face the music.' In that case it is necessary either to kill or pass her by, and to do the latter a very wide detour must be made, otherwise we

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may ride right upon her lying in wait. This is one of the greatest dangers of the sport, and necessitates our keeping tally of the number on foot before us. Every time they pass out of sight, even for a moment, we must make sure the same number reappear. If, galloping over these rolling downs, we come suddenly upon a lion lying in wait for us, there is almost sure to be an accident. I did it once, but fortunately my revolver jumped out of the holster into my hand, of its own volition as it seemed, and I was able to put in a bullet that checked the lioness for a moment ; and before she could recover I was well away after the others. It is a distinctly unpleasant sensation to come suddenly upon a lion crouching to spring, at ten feet or thereabout ! I did not feel that I was to blame for carelessness on that occasion. We counted thirteen in the troop, and there may have been more, as some were said to have gone back unseen ; and anyway it is a very difficult thing to keep tally of thirteen lions when you and they are travelling at speed.

If we make a detour to avoid the waiting lioness, we must not forget her existence, as she may follow and take advantage of our preoccupation with the others to give trouble.

While following lions, particularly when fairly close, one must be careful to avoid places where it is not possible to turn quickly and gallop in any direction ; for if the lion happens to turn and charge on such ground, the betting is all in favour of his getting the best of it. A lion which has been hustled along at the gallop does not travel far—a mile, or even less—and he turns to lie down facing the enemy. Once he is getting tired a lion can be stopped almost where one chooses by riding up directly behind, within forty yards or thereabouts, making all the noise the lungs can command and discharging a revolver.

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In nearly every case these proceedings will bring him round at once. Watch for his head to turn, and that moment ride for all you are worth in the *other* direction —*i.e.*, if he turns to the right, ride to the left ; if to the left, ride to the right. The object of this manœuvre is to oblige him to turn right round before he can follow you. Your turn should be made at as sharp an angle as the horse can accomplish without checking speed. The lion will come after you for a little way, then turn back and resume his original direction at a walk. You turn and follow him.

Now is your time. When he sees you once more in his wake, he will again turn and lie down facing, tail twitching, legs well under, ready for a charge. You then select a spot, *in the direction whence you came*, at about 150 or even 200 yards distance, dismount, take your rifle from the gun-bearer, who holds your horse by the off-rein, his head turned from the lion, step a pace or two aside, that the discharge shall not scare the horses, and put in your shot—necessarily at the lion's head, for that is all of him you can see. If you miss, as likely as not the shot will bring him upon his feet, thus giving a grand chance of killing out of hand. In any case he is not likely to charge at once ; if he means business he will advance at a trot, breaking into his rush only when within a hundred yards. This is the general rule ; but it does not invariably hold good, for I have known lions start to gallop from quite 200 yards.

Speaking for myself, this is the time I always remount ; I do not like charging lions. If you follow my tactics you will run back to your horse, pass the rifle in your right hand across the saddle to the mounted gun-bearer on the other side, at the same moment catching the reins with the left, swing into the saddle and follow the gun-bearer,

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the charging lion grunting in your rear. For if he has not started before, he will do so the moment he sees the horses jump off. As a rule he does not pursue far; he stops, turns back and tries to follow his companions, or makes for the refuge he had in view from the beginning of the hunt.

Whatever or wherever that refuge may be, *never* ride between it and the lion, for that means a certain and determined charge. It seems to have been this mistake that cost Grey his life on the Athi Plains not very long ago. He rode past the lions, and, having dismounted to take his shot, was charged by one of the bunch, which turned aside to attack him.

Should a lion be making for cover close at hand it is more difficult to stop him, as he naturally hopes to gain it before you come up. Under such conditions risks must be taken. You must ride almost on his tail till he, maddened with rage, turns like the cat he is and gives chase. This is a mistake on his part; for if you have nerve and can trust your horse, the lion may be lured away from the refuge by simply holding in your mount, so that the lion thinks he is about to catch it. By these tactics I have drawn a lion over a hundred yards from the cover, never getting more than twenty yards or so ahead of him —and nearly pulling my horse's jaw off doing it, for he wanted holding. This method is not to be adopted without precaution. It is essential that you have a fair start, so that the lion may spend his first terrifically fast rush in the endeavour to catch you; that over, he comes on more slowly, and the horse can leave him at any moment. You must be *beyond range of the first rush.* I do not believe the horse has ever been foaled to which a lion could not give twenty-five yards start in a hundred *from a stand.* He gets off at once from his first movement,

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and is on the horse before the latter can get his legs fairly under him. He would be alongside within fifty yards. But if the horse has not the ghost of a chance starting from a stand with twenty-five yards' law, the lion does not live that can catch him once in his stride.

In any case, 'drawing' a lion as I have described is exciting and risky work; for if, as once happened to me, you come upon a bit of bad ground, the lion has a much better chance than you would willingly allow him.

If a lion comes to a stand in long grass or thick cover—a thing he is only too likely to do—even greater care must be taken. Should the grass be comparatively short, you may often make him show himself by riding round his hiding-place in a fairly large circle. Though you cannot see him he is watching, and in his discretion never takes his eyes off you. It is in this way he betrays his whereabouts, because he continually turns round to follow your movements, and thus discloses his position, if he does not actually offer a shot. The best plan is to send the gun-bearer round first, while you remain still and keep a sharp look-out for any movement in the grass. Should this fail to show you the beast, ride round the cover yourself, taking, however, the greatest care not to lose sight of the place where you believe him to be, in case you stumble upon him unaware.

If the lion is not seen after making a few circuits, a shot or two into the cover, firing low, will often bring him upon his feet. Should he still not show himself, if one rides back, or rather to one side, and watches from a little distance, there is the possibility that he will put up his head to see what has become of you, and if the coast is clear.

While trying these methods, it is essential never under any circumstances to pull up with your horse's head in

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the direction of the lion's hiding-place. Always turn his head away. Should the lion charge out, you want the very best start you can get. For the same reason it is injudicious to pull up within less than, say, forty yards of the spot where he may be lying.

I have often drawn a lion which would not yield to other measures by galloping rapidly past within twenty-five yards or so of the spot where he lay. Unable to resist temptation, he charges, and is thus lured out of the cover. I do not recommend this plan for general adoption; it is too risky unless you know your horse well, and he is thoroughly accustomed to lions.

And ever to be borne in mind is this rule: when a lion is out of sight, yet near, always keep your horse moving in such wise that you can put him to speed at any moment.

The commonest mistake made in this form of sport is failure to press the lion at the beginning of the chase. To bring him to a stand, he must be *pressed*. It is no use to draw alongside, as the novice too often is satisfied to do. The lion thus treated simply charges the horseman and pursues his way towards cover. I fell into this mistake at first, and lost a few lions, before I recognised the weakness of these tactics.

The day when we had thirteen lions before us remains in my mind very clearly. I was returning from a safari in the Kitui district, and by some mischance lost my men near El donyo Sabuk. After sleeping out one night with no companion but my gun-bearer Megari, I rode for Nairobi, where I hoped to spend Christmas. It chanced, however, that at Nine Mile Camp I saw tents, and rode up to ask for some food. It proved to be the camp of the late Lord Waterford and the Hon. Cyril Ward, and they kindly invited me to stay over Christmas, an in-

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vitation I gladly accepted, for I was able to requite their hospitality in a fashion such keen sportsmen appreciated. On my way to Nine Mile Camp, and at no great distance therefrom, I had seen lions, and suggested trying to gallop them.

The following morning, just where I expected to find the lions, we saw vultures flying low round one particular spot. They continually dropped and rose again, so I felt sure the lions were still at their kill, whatever it might be, and, leaving the rest of the party, rode forward to reconnoitre. A lion and lioness were in view, so I returned to make plans. Lady Waterford and Mrs Cyril Ward were to ride to some high ground on our right, whence they would be able to see the fun, while Lord Waterford, Mr Ward and myself rode for the two lions.

The sight awaiting us when we came in view of the kill again was indeed a surprise. I had reported a lion and a lioness; we saw not only those two, but eleven others! We pushed on; there was no time to think. I picked out three of the troop that were heading for the plains, and rode after them. Swinging wide of their line to avoid some bad ground, I came suddenly upon a lioness lying by the track. Whether she was one of the thirteen or a fourteenth I do not know, nor was the point one I had time to consider, for she was not more than three or four paces distant. My revolver came into my hand somehow, and the bullet struck the ground just under her nose, disconcerting her for the moment and giving me time to get clear. When I looked back she had turned off and was going down the gully. Leaving her to her own devices, I held on after the original three, and stopped two just as they got to the plains. I was able to hold them till Lord Waterford came up and bagged them both. He used up all the cartridges he had with

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him, so rode back to get more. We heard Mr Ward blazing away in the gully, so knew that he had his hands full.

Lord Waterford gone, I caught sight of three more of our lions making their way across the plains, so put the pony after them; and as the country was quite open I soon had them rounded up. I held them for a long time, and at last began to feel uneasy about the other guns, for nobody appeared, and it was long since I heard shots. At length I decided to return, and, leaving the lions, started to ride back; but I had not gone far when I saw Lord Waterford coming, so turned for the lions again. I was not surprised to find that the three I had been herding so carefully in the open had taken advantage of my absence to seek refuge in a small reed-bed. I could see two of them, and seeking the third, dismounted to walk a few yards towards an ant-hill, whence, the ground being higher, I might be able to discover the whereabouts of the lost one with my glasses. I must have gone about six paces from my pony when the missing lion, a female, sprang up from that ant-hill and stood growling. She was within twelve yards, and looked extraordinarily wicked. I had only the .45 Colt's revolver, a poor weapon with which to face an angry lion, and this one was angry. She had been galloped, and was in a thoroughly bad temper, a foe with whom it would not do to take any liberties. I thought she was certain to charge, and stood waiting events for what seemed a very long time; but she did not move, and it occurred to me that as I could not retreat to the pony, I would try whether he would not advance to me. He was a great pet, and would come at call—under ordinary circumstances! But these were not ordinary, and I had doubts. I called him without looking round, for I dared not take my eyes off the lioness, and

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I cannot describe the sensations with which, a minute later, I felt his head against my arm.

Still keeping my eyes on the lioness, I backed a step, till I could vault into the saddle. Once there I gave the pony the spur, and had him extended even more quickly than I hoped—and that is saying a good deal. I had been thoroughly frightened, and this, as usual, put me in a furious temper; hence I could not resist pulling up within about thirty yards and sending a pistol bullet into the lioness. It brought her after us at once. She was alongside almost directly, and her head was almost level with my knee when I thrust the revolver in her face. I do not know if the shot hit, close as she was. I was much too busy getting all I could out of the pony. When I looked back she was making for the reed-bed, limping from the effects of my first shot. The other two guns arrived soon after, and we went down to the reed-bed, where we found and killed another of the three, but failed to find its companion.

The way that lioness overhauled the pony was an object-lesson in the relative speeds of lion and horse—a lesson I took to heart. The pony, though small, was wonderfully fast—Sir Claude de Crespigny, who rode him on one occasion, told me he was one of the fastest ponies for his inches he had ever ridden—yet the rapidity with which the lioness overtook us proved the amazing speed of the first rush. As I said before, the charging lion is at top speed from the start.

We returned the next day to see if we could not pick up any of the wounded, of which there were one or two, or any stragglers. One lion was found, and he, though only half-grown, gave a lot of sport, taking up his quarters in a small patch of reeds, whence he refused to budge. Eventually, knowing it was a young lion with which we

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had to deal, I went into the reeds and managed to move him, when Lord Waterford promptly shot him. That was Christmas Day, and Lord Waterford doubtless remembered it for the mixed bag he made. Later on in the day he got a rhino and an eland.

That pony was simply perfect for galloping lion. He was as sure-footed as he was plucky, docile and fast, and once you put him after any animal he understood what was wanted, and might be trusted to follow, as a well-trained pony follows the polo-ball. On one occasion I was riding a lioness at full speed when we came to bad country and I gave him his head to pick his own way —I always do on bad ground. He was dodging through it when we came to worse, an awful outcrop of rocks; but he went through this without a check, on and off big slabs, I sitting still waiting for the smash that seemed inevitable; I dared not touch the reins lest I threw him out of his stride, and held on, praying that the lioness would not take it into her head to set up among those rocks. If she had done so, I believe the pony would have gone straight at her as he would at a pig; and then——!

Fortunately, she did not take advantage of the rocks; she went through them and out the other side into the river-bed. The gods were on her side that day, however. My brother, who had just come out to East Africa, was with me, and, wishing him to get his first lion, I forwent the chance when I might have killed. In the event, we found ourselves at the foot of a slope, the lioness at the top within twenty yards growling at us, an ideal position for a charge. But she let us off, vanishing into the grass, and we never saw her again.

I once tried to kill a lion with only a revolver, and strangely enough, at the place where the lioness so nearly

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got me on that Christmas Day. I did not go out with any intention of testing the effects of revolvers on lions. I was riding by a stream, margined by a belt of reeds, when a lion charged out. He was hardly clear of the cover before he stopped, and as he stood still facing me I fired the pistol I had drawn the moment I heard his rush. Much to my surprise he reared straight up and pitched over backwards. For a moment I thought I had killed him; but he was soon on his feet, staggering through the stream, shaking his head as he went. He looked so sick I made sure he was badly hit, and thought to finish him with the revolver. To cut a long story short, the frequency of the shots I had to fire, first from motives of humanity, then in self-defence, brought out my brother and Mr Hill, and the former killed him with his rifle. Examination of the carcase showed how ineffectual were revolver bullets. Not one had penetrated more than two inches where it encountered the muscles of the head and shoulders; one that found his ribs had gone in easily. My first shot had struck him fairly in the eye, so it was well to destroy him.

I do not advise anyone to try hunting lions with a revolver. Again that day I owed my life to the pony. He had seen the better part of a hundred lions killed, and as he had always come out of the fray with a whole skin, he had little fear of them.

The pistol is often useful as an auxiliary. Once with a friend I made a very early start to try and find a lion which had killed the day before not far from our camp. Drawing the first cover blank, we rode on to a small creek where we could see large numbers of game; and when within about a mile of it, dismounted to use the glasses. It was a great sight: some seven or eight hundred head, a troop of eland among them, were at a water-hole

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in the bed of a deep creek, two eland doing sentry duty while the rest drank.

After watching for a time, we saw their movement away from the creek, the eland leading; and riding forward detected the cause in the shape of a long low animal, presently to be recognised as a lioness. At once we mounted and rode for all we were worth, across the creek, over an awful stretch of cracked cotton soil where the horses could hardly keep their feet, and at last on to good ground. Five minutes' scurry and the lioness lay down in longish grass; so before we began business in earnest I retreated a little way to tighten up my girths, which had come loose, while G—— remained to watch the beast—or rather watch her hiding-place, for the grass, a foot or thereabout in length, was quite enough to hide her completely.

We were trying to see where she was, when suddenly she gave a grunt and put up her head. This would have been the time to shoot, but thinking to move her into a better place I rode up within 100 yards and fired three revolver shots. One bullet hit her, and as though it had touched a spring she was after me; but I, prepared, was out of danger in a minute. When I looked back she was limping up a little bit of rising ground.

Here she lay down again, and in a place even more difficult than the grass. By riding rings round the cover she was made to move, and after half an hour of futile work I changed on to the mule, which would stand like a rock, and at 120 yards put a bullet into the chest of the lioness. She gave two bounds forward and fell in a heap. We found that the bullet had torn to shreds the upper part of the heart, with the attached blood-vessel.

I do not know, on second thoughts, that this is a good

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instance of the utility of the revolver ; but it often serves a useful purpose to stir dangerous game when you want to reserve the rifle for emergency.

Sometimes the chase is short and sharp. Starting one morning before daylight with my mounted gun-bearer, I rode to the higher ground running parallel with the Athi River, and there separated from the boy, he taking one side of the ridge and I the other to see what we might see. We rode quietly forward till, coming to a point where the view was shut out by rising ground, I moved slowly towards the crest of the ridge. It is always well to approach the top of an eminence with caution, lest appearing suddenly on the sky-line one alarms game ; in fact, I frequently dismount and use the horse as cover while thus in view, at any rate till I have had a good look round. On this occasion I caught sight of a cheeta walking unconcernedly in the hollow below, and also two rhino. The presence of the latter did not please, for I could see the ground was bad—a dried swamp—and I could not get at the cheeta without giving the rhino my wind. That might mean a charge—nothing to worry about on good ground, but not to be courted on bad ; so, thinking there might be a chance of edging past between them and the creek, I tried it and failed. It became necessary to turn back, and by the time I reached the higher land across the creek the cheeta had vanished. Such failures are all in the day's work, and the gun-bearer joining me, we rode on down the creek towards camp ; the sun was up, but still low down, and we were riding towards it. Presently, half over the skyline, a large black-looking animal appeared. For a moment I thought it was a rhino, but the glasses soon showed it to be a lion. This is a very possible mistake, the curve of the back being the same in both beasts ; and in this case the

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sun was in my eyes, making it even harder than usual to judge distance and size.

The lion saw us at the moment we saw him, and after staring dropped his head and trotted over the ridge. Trusting that, as he was not alarmed, he would stop on the other side to see if he were followed, we rode quietly up to the brow, to see him standing about 200 yards away. No sooner did we appear than he was off at score, and I had to ride hard to get close enough to press him into a gallop. He soon turned with a grunt to stand, looking very wicked, head low, his tail lashing, and every now and then going straight up, the usual indication of pending charge. I rode back, got the rifle from the boy and put a couple of bullets into him: the first he acknowledged with a grunt, the second without a sound, sinking down where he stood. He never moved, but I rode round him before going near. I have learned to distrust the apparently dead lion until his skin is off. In this case it was all right, my second bullet having entered the brain.

It was a bit of luck catching sight of this lion in the way we did; most often lions are found only with the assistance of vultures or 'bunching' game.

One rule that should never under any circumstances be broken (though, earlier in this article, I am afraid I told how I once broke it myself) is that which forbids the following of a lion into thick cover, whether on horseback or not. Poor Lucas of El donyo Sabuk was killed, and G. H. Goldfinch was mauled, through neglect of this rule. They were after a lioness which sought refuge in some long grass, and rashly went in after her. She first attacked Goldfinch, biting him through the thigh. Lucas, seeing it, jumped off his pony and fired, when she left Goldfinch and rushed at him, pulling him down as he

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tried to mount and mauling him terribly. Goldfinch, in his turn, went to the rescue, crawling through the grass with his disabled leg dragging, and arrived within a yard or two of Lucas lying with the lioness upon him. Obeying the word, Lucas raised his arm, affording Goldfinch a clear shot at the brute's head, which killed her on the spot. All the wounds Lucas had sustained were on his face and arm, so, once helped upon his horse, he was able to keep the saddle, and rode for the farm. Goldfinch was in a different plight, bitten through the thigh; but he contrived somehow to remount, and slowly made his way home. Arriving, he first attended to Lucas, and did all he could for him before he attempted to look after his own injuries. News of the accident reaching me the same evening, I went out with a doctor and brought them both in. Everything was done for them, but Lucas died a week later. He had been fearfully mangled by tooth and claw.

It is dangerous to dismount too close for your shot. I had an exciting time with one of the best lions I ever killed through making this mistake, though, under the circumstances, it was almost unavoidable. I had ridden the beast to a stand on the edge of a deep gully, where, by reason of the bush, I had to get off the horse at a point much too near. On the ground I could not get a good view of the lion, and at last took a chance at what I could see of him—always a mistake. I hit, and next moment he was coming. I was using the small rifle, and the chance of stopping him at the charge with that was not good enough, so I turned to remount. The horse—it is unfortunate, sometimes, that horses' eyes should be so set in the head that they can see behind them so easily—the horse saw the lion coming, and began to 'play up,' capering about to such an extent that I had to drop

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the rifle and fall across the saddle the best way I could; and thus we started, my mind occupied by speculation whether the lion would catch us before my brains were knocked out against a tree as I lay across the horse struggling to recover my seat. Luckily we got clear, and the lion fell into the error, not uncommon with his species, of pursuing too far. He followed us well into the open, and I was able to send the syce back to the safari for my heavy rifle, with which I finished him.

The reader will have seen the moral. It is dangerous to dismount too close to a lion, and it is still more dangerous to do what I did—fire when you are not quite sure of the spot where you are placing the bullet. A lion unwounded and unprovoked by a compulsory gallop is not, as a rule, to be feared, but once wounded or his temper spoiled by hustling, it is a very different thing; and in this case I had to deal with a lion who was wounded after his feelings had been already outraged by being forced to gallop. If circumstances compel you to dismount at close quarters, you should use a heavy rifle; or, if a small one, exercise the very greatest care to put the bullet in exactly the right place.

Though the unwounded and unprovoked lion is not as a rule dangerous, I have known cases in which a beast taken by surprise at close quarters has attacked, but this I attribute to fright. It is quite comprehensible that a lion suddenly awakened by someone whose approach has been quite noiseless should think himself in danger, and take the offensive.

A man-eating lion is, of course, an exception; he will charge home without any provocation.

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II.

THE GREAT BOAR OF BIRKATHELI.

I.

THE Great Boar of Birkatheli had become a tradition—some said a myth—with the hard-riding and not over-numerous folk who formed the X Tent Club. Their country is tucked away in an unfashionable part of India, where the going is vile and the pig few, fast and ferocious. It is for this reason that the X Tent Club has never been the vogue, and the hard-bitten few who hunt there hope that it never will be. Still, there is no reason why the world should be done out of the true story of their Great Boar.

The X country has always provided a variety of sport which calls on its men to be prepared to ride anything—boar by preference, of course, but also hyena often, stag very rarely, lynx and wolf as a very rare exception, and panther as a painful necessity sometimes to be faced. For many of the X country beats hold panther. He is not, however, an animal that often faces the open, but when he does, and when chased by men on horseback with spears, he produces often a marked deterioration amongst the horses, and sometimes amongst the riders as well. A tiger has been met in a beat. But he, being not a resident in, but a traveller through, their country, was looked on by the X Tent Club as not on the menu,

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and was dealt with *à la carte*, being disposed of otherwise than by spear-thrust. I feel positive that they could have taken him on with the spear and made a clean job of him, but they are notoriously averse to notoriety; babblers are ever abroad, and someone might have babbled about it, and the X Tent Club might have become notorious.

Haunting everyone, appearing when not wanted, invisible when most desired, truculent, evasive, subtle, the Great Boar of Birkatheli was ever with them—his death their great ambition. He had grown considerably during the last few years, and was now commonly described as being as big as a bull-buffalo—that is to say, some eighteen hands high, with tushes certainly not less, and probably a good deal more, than six feet in length. The more sober among the members, however, did not accept these dimensions as strictly accurate, but had no doubt that he was an immense and a terrible boar.

II.

Seen he had been literally by hundreds. He was the talk of the countryside, where he was given to hustling honest cultivators off their fields and mauling them as they fled. These men's voices died in their bellies when they described him. Scores of beaters, who had hurled themselves into thorn-bushes to avoid his onslaught, were also able to give detailed descriptions of him. They seemed to have viewed him, measured him and weighed him with the extreme accuracy only possible to people standing upside-down in thorn-bushes. Lastly, he had been viewed by young spears, out for the first time, and these declared that he was "absoolotly the biggest boar they'd ever seen," and this was very likely true.

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All this counted for nothing, or next to nothing. The Boar, on such evidence, might well have been several different boars, or even sows, and of any size from that of a mouse upwards. But what did establish his existence as a real out-and-outer was the considered evidence of One-who-knew, and he was Dhanni Thakur, Tent Club shikari of over forty years' experience. Dhanni seldom talked, never exaggerated and possessed legs of such immense size that the sight of them alone inspired confidence. For his were the stoutest pair of Indian-bred legs ever produced on that spindle-shanked Peninsular. And his shoes were of enormous extent, with one great leather tongue reaching half-way up his shin and another half-way up his calf, protecting the vast areas of leg from thorn and spear-grass. Now Dhanni, when asked about the Boar, merely replied that he was "a very heavy one." But he spoke the word 'very' with a sharp intaking of his breath. He said nothing more, but it was enough. He never spoke uphill like that for ordinary things. He would make his reply standing with his immense legs slightly apart, his staff hooked across his back in the crook of his elbows—a veritable rock of a man, with a gentle smile and a slow quiet *patois*. He had never, I believe, been observed to squat native fashion, his large calves and proportionate hams being in strong opposition to this posture.

Asked why the Boar had never yet given anyone a chance, he coughed gently and said nothing. His glance wandered for a moment towards two very young sportsmen, flickered and then went out. But he said nothing more. Asked again, more privately, the same question, he named these two young persons gently and said that on two occasions not long previous each had had a chance, each had squandered it, neither had been aware of it.

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That one of them by an ill-timed movement had put the Boar back. That the other, by composing a sonnet to his mistress's eyebrow, had failed to see what passed before his very nose. That was what Dhanni implied, but not how he put it. What he said was: "The Boar walked out from the hill and across the plain, a mile wide. He then passed up the side of Sironja and over the top and disappeared. He passed within two hundred paces of the Sahib, who was alone. We on the hill could see both Boar and Sahib. The latter was looking towards the Boar, but was as one blind or dreaming. We shouted to him, but he took no notice. He was thinking perhaps" —here Dhanni coughed behind the back of his hand and made a slight deferential pause—"he was thinking perhaps—of a Meem (lady)." This for Dhanni was coming it pretty strong. Scarcely had we credited him with so subtle a knowledge of white men and maidens. But once he had probably gone a-courting himself, and we are told that in these matters colour makes no difference.

Rest assured, however, that the love-sick party was roasted to a turn over that business.

III.

But a day came. It usually does, if these traditionally large and evasive boars which haunt periodically every Tent Club are not mere myths.

A party of trustworthy spears, somewhat behind time owing to the lateness of one of their number, were on their way to the place where spears were always posted for that particular beat. Not the Birkatheli beat, but one adjoining it. The beaters had begun their booings, and could be faintly heard a mile away. The party was just breaking into a canter to get to its stations, when

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the flat open ground some way in front of them spewed up an enormous boar. His identity as The Boar was not at that moment realised. One moment the plain was bare, the next the Boar stood on it. He did not stand long, for he immediately saw how things were. The word " Ride ! " was at once given, but from the first the chase was a hopeless one. Quarry and pursuers, on converging lines, steered for the same spot on Birkatheli Hill. But it was obvious that the former must reach the hill, and probably be lost on its shaggy slopes, long before the latter could get on terms with him. And this he did, while the horsemen were yet some hundreds of yards behind. On reaching the hill the Boar had immediately disappeared, for here the scrub grew very dense. But by the time his pursuers came storming up to the slope, he could not have reached the top and passed over the crest, nor have moved far to a flank in either direction. His movements in either case should have been plainly audible. But there was no sound, and no sight of a boar. Of the four horsemen, one remained halted, one galloped to either flank, and one put his horse at a less difficult place on the slope, forced him up so far as he could go, and then flung himself off and gained on foot, and remained on, the crest of the hill. The four men were in communication with one another, and none of them could hear or see the Boar. The inference was a satisfactory one. He was lying up and they had ringed him. A little patience and they would have him moving again. Another party of three spears came up, and beaters with Dhanni at their head were streaming across to help. On their arrival, Dhanni stood for a moment at the foot of the slope and enunciated four pregnant words, which translated into English make three and a blank, " This is the ——." All then knew without further explanation

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that it was the Birkatheli Boar which lay within the cordon. When Dhanni had gained more breath, his first demand was for medical aid to be sent back to tie up two of his henchmen whom the Boar had damaged ere he had left the hill and taken to the nullah which had led from the hill into the middle of the plain. It was on emerging from this nullah—quite invisible at a few hundred yards distance—that he had so suddenly appeared to the belated party of spears.

Operations were at once begun, and hopes were mountains high. It is ill tackling a boar, or anything that bites, from below. So the beaters were sent to the top of the slope, while one party of spears made themselves scarce at the bottom and the others took post at the top. The hill-top being lavishly supplied with boulders, and some sixty men being now on hand to hurl them, that hundred feet of slope was literally torn with missiles from top to bottom and for a space to right and left of a hundred yards. Nothing hiding there could have endured it—or so it was supposed. After fifteen minutes the barrage was lifted. Nothing had moved. Yet so convinced was everyone that the Boar must be there, that six spears now left their horses and scrambled along the slope as well as they might, crawling under bushes one moment and climbing over rocks the next. Every inch of the slope was not literally searched, but the six declared (wrongly) that there was nothing there. This verdict shook the conviction of everyone else that there was, and each now began to remember instances of boars who had simply vanished, despite the best-drawn cordons. Gradually the conclusion was arrived at that either the brute had gone to earth like a wart-hog and then stopped himself in (this was the idea of his original pursuers), or that there had been some bungling which had enabled

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him to slip away before he was properly picqueted (this was the opinion of the other spears), or that there was magic about (this was the opinion of the beaters). Operations were, therefore, broken off, and beating continued in a desultory fashion. There was just a hope that they might still find him, but neither this nor any other boar would have been so accommodating—and so the day ended, blank and bleak.

Thus finished the first hunt in which the Boar had been plainly seen, perfectly recognised and properly chased.

The damaged beaters had not been merely knocked over by the heedless rush of a startled boar, but had been deliberately stood over, and fearfully, though not fatally, rent by a vindictive fellow. After all, a fellow reputed as big as a buffalo and furnished with tushes not less than six feet long, must do something to justify his reputation. The wounded pair were borne away protesting to a regimental hospital. Much would they have preferred cow-dung and mantrums (charms) in their own residences to antiseptics in a clean hospital. To make sure against poison, each demanded that two companions should remain with him, and being of no caste whatever—being indeed swine-keepers and eaters—they demanded a special Brahman cook to prepare their food and nobody else's. This to protect them from defilement. Since they bled in the service of the Tent Club, both demands were granted. An attendant charm-merchant had also to be laid on, who spent his time in weaving spells and slaying dozens of black-cocks, with sprinklings and incantations. Thanks *solely* to these precautions, and despite a very able doctor's ministrations, the wounded men made a complete recovery, and no doubt later exalted the Boar to the height of an elephant with the tusks of a mammoth.

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Dhanni scratched his head over the disappointment. A very long experience had taught him that boars are lost not through magic but mishandling. But on this occasion he was forced back on magic. He had witnessed the whole hunt from his hill-top, knew the parties concerned were not greenhorns, had noted their tactics on reaching the hill just after the Boar, and approved of every action they took.

IV.

Once more the X Tent Club met, and it was the Birkatheli beat. This hill possessed a plateau-like top, perfectly flat and nearly bare, having the appearance, from a little way off, of good going—nice red-brown soil, a pleasure to ride over and fall on if a fall were thinkable here. But on nearer approach, the nice red soil turned out to be nice red boulders, lying loose without any earth between them, and so closely packed as to resemble from a distance a well-cultivated upland plain awaiting the oncoming of a rich crop. Yet despite the boulders, horses both could, and often did, travel over them with speed and safety. How I know not, for walking on foot was laborious and ankle-twisting work.

With the beat on top of Birkatheli, on this occasion as often before, rode a party of spears. The hill-crest ended all round in a very abrupt drop or scarp, meeting, a dozen feet below, the steep bush and rock-covered slope that ran down to the plain a hundred feet or so below. In some places the scarp was perpendicular, in some it was undercut. It was on these slopes that pig harboured, and it was out of these slopes that the beat was now endeavouring to turn them, and to make them leave Birkatheli and pass across some mile of open flat plain to the neighbour hill Sironja. The party of spears

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that went with the beat on the top of the former hill was there to take on odd pig that were lying on the plateau and not on its slopes, or pig which happened to prefer running across the plateau rather than across the plain below it. It was always on the plain that most sport was expected.

On that day, and by Dhanni's request, the beaters had been assembled not at the customary spot near the end of the hill at dawn, but on the night previous at a village two miles away. The beating was also timed to start at an unusually late hour. And there was to be no meet in the usual sense of the word—that is to say, no gathering of the spears and allotment of parties at the usual time-honoured tree at a certain road bifurcation; but these were to ride straight out from cantonments to their stations. In short, everything had been done to defeat the private information-bureau which the Boar undoubtedly maintained to warn him of a meet.

The party that rode with the beat on the hill-top consisted of two men only. Their selection had been a matter of some thought on the part of the Hon. Secretary. Finally, he had selected an old hand and a young one, both well mounted on old proved pig-stickers. Of the two men, the old hand was known to have his head screwed on the right way, and as the young one always rode with several spare necks, it did not so much matter which way his head was screwed on. Thus was secured a combination of two virtues, recklessness and cunning, seldom found in one person. A really first-class goer after hog must have both. He may then hope to be in the final heat for the Kadir Cup, and if Fortune smiles very broadly on him, may win it.

At 11 A.M. the beat moved off, a few men scrambling along the slope of the hill, the majority bombarding it

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with stones and yells from above. The two spears moved near the crestline, but a little way back from it.

At 11.10 A.M. the Boar lounged from under his look-out station, an umbrella-shaped tree knee-deep in grass and thorn, which commanded a view in all directions. At this moment the two horsemen were some fifty yards from him, saw him plainly, and at this moment also Dhanni clearly ejaculated three words in Hindustani, which make two and a blank in English—"That's the ——." The beaters precipitated themselves like sparks flying from stricken hot iron. The Boar looked at things, but not for long. As the spears made at him, hoping that he would meet this friendly overture, he disappeared over the crest. Two seconds later they arrived also at the crest and looked down. The Boar could be heard crashing downhill, but between him and them was a twelve-foot perpendicular drop, which even the younger of the two men thought it wiser not to attempt. No matter for that. If the Boar really meant to quit the hill and make across the open, let him do it unhustled. Meanwhile a rapid search was made for a way down. This was soon found about a hundred yards back. Down they slid and scrambled, feet out of irons, and reached the plain right side up. The Boar could now be seen again, legging it away fast and a thousand yards from them. He had no intention of facing the open, but was bundling along the base of the hill, and looked as if he knew exactly where he meant to get to.

Birkatheli is a long hill, three miles from end to end. And the hunt had started close to one end, and was moving fast towards the other. The horsemen had galloped a mile before they had reduced the interval between them and the Boar from a thousand yards to five hundred yards. For a big fellow—and he was very

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big—he was speedy. The sugar-cane had, however, all long been cut and harvested; pig were on a low diet, and kept fit by having to range far to get it. The Boar was evidently in great running fettle, and looked like turning the eastern end of the hill and continuing along its northern skirts, or of holding straight on and making for the intricacies of a typical X country river-bed. One or the other he must do, or be run into. When the two horsemen were within a hundred yards of him, he solved the question by turning sharp into and up the hillside on his left. To be sure, they might have thought of that, but a very heavy, very blown, boar should avoid steep climbing. Within eight seconds his pursuers had reached the spot where he had turned up and disappeared. A glance showed that the slope, though possible to a man on foot, was not so for the stoutest-hearted horse ever foaled. The thorn-bushes were too dense and high, and some of the rocks were insurmountable. The spot, although the two men did not realise this in the heat of the moment, was that at which the Boar had been lost, as narrated heretofore, at a former meet.

At once they separated: one dashed forward, the other back, a hundred yards or so, and both kept their eyes on the crest of the slope. Anything to avoid losing touch with the Boar; and this at the present juncture could only be done by eyes or ears. There was not a doubt that he was between them, and had not passed over the crestline above, nor far to right or left. It was now seen that the former alternative was impossible, for the scarp just below the crest was here undercut, and jutting over the crest itself like a bushy eyebrow was an abattis of thorn impenetrable even to the wedge-shaped ram which the boar calls a head. But, as on the former occasion, there was neither sound nor movement.

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"Isn't this the place where we lost him before?" called the senior man. But his companion, hat off and hand to ear, was busy listening. He had caught on odd sound, something like that of a faint sawing. He moved back to the spot above which it proceeded. The Boar had turned in just here. The sounds were now much plainer, and came from under the crest, a hundred feet above him. They now sounded more like the breathings of a giant far gone in asthma.

He beckoned up his companion. "What d'you make of it?" he said. The answer came, "I make it that the old devil's up there and gone in the wind. That last bust did in his bellows." They listened again, and the sounds were convincing.

If a boar is to be taken on on foot, it is best to do so when he is well blown. The two men tumbled off their horses, and running them to a tree, hitched them to it. Spurs were cast off, and then, spear in hand, they attacked the slope, steering by sound, crawling under bushes, climbing over rocks, on hands and knees. At last they came nearly to the foot of the scarp and paused before a rock about the size and height of an ordinary font. From the other side of the rock came the sounds, very loud, very painful and very alarming. Their farther direct advance was blocked by the rock, but round one side of it wound a little intriguing path and disappeared. This path passing between scarp and rock admitted the passage of one person only, and barely that. Both men looked at it—and swallowed.

They were crouched behind the rock and took breath and whispered counsel here. The older man was unhappy, the younger beamed. Both recognised the facts of the case. They were to be slayers of the Boar of Birkatheli, to lay the bogey of the X Tent Club, but they were to

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do it on foot and in a very nasty place. Between them and him lay this font-like rock, and round it lay this little intriguing path. The issue was lucidly clear. It was to be either over the rock or round it, and the sooner the better.

But first to have a look over. This was easily done. The rock provided a breastwork, though their right flank could be turned by the path.

Raising themselves, they cautiously peered over the top. The sounds of the roarer, just on the other side of it, had continued and grown no less. They had seen a big boar running from them, and he had looked enormous even then. But what they saw now took their breath away. Within spear-prick of them, not spear-thrust, lying within a slight cavity in the scarp, his huge length sprawled at full extent, lay the vastest boar that ever was. On his side he lay, panting like a dog, roaring like ten horses all gone badly in the wind, and looking every moment larger and more awesome from his *négligé* posture and extreme proximity to his spectators. So thought they, and they thought wrong. He was to look larger yet and to come nearer.

From above he was, in this his secret lair, perfectly protected both from fire, view and approach by the frieze of dense thorns that projected over it. His front was hidden from view and well camouflaged or baffled from even a close scrutiny by the font-like rock. Alone the little track which he had worn for himself pointed to something being behind the rock. And this his searchers on the previous occasion had overlooked.

The scrutiny was quite a leisurely one. The Boar lay apparently dead to the world, too far gone to take notice of them. There was time to make and unmake two plans and to adopt a third. To leave one spear on guard, while

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another found his way up and collected men, was dismissed. Nothing could touch him from above. On the former occasion nothing *had* touched him, and the bombardment had been fierce. To pass in by that narrow path, one man at a time, and no room to wield a spear—that plan was gently put aside. The third plan was for one man to boost the other up on to the font, and literally to fall on him with the spear. But the roof of the cavity was so low and so close that even falling on him appeared a doubtful possibility.

Time was passing. The Boar might be foxing. He might stop those terrible noises and come out at them by his little sally-port, or make a dash for liberty down that slope. And down that precipitous slope would he go—some thirty stone of him. Nothing and nobody could stop him. This was a ghastly prospect—to lose the Birkatheli Boar through sheer funk to take him on promptly.

"Give us a leg up," said the younger man; and next moment he stood on the top of the rock. It was firm and flat, and by leaning forward while the other held him by the slack of his pants, he thought he could just reach the Boar so as to prick him. The question was, What would the Boar do when so treated? As no one could reply to that question, the answer had to be elicited by experiment. He leaned, and delivered a faltering dab. Some eighth of an inch of the spear-point went home in the thin-skinned, hairless, abdominal area.

A lighted match obtruded into a powder-barrel could not have produced speedier results. Really no one would have thought it of such a heaving, utterly blown animal. In a flash the Boar was up, and in another he was on his hind-legs with two fore-trotters planted on the rock. His great head made two swift sidelong sweeps, but his tushes

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met only thin and recently vacated air. He whom they sought was at that moment in space, and wondering what sort of landing he would make. For he had quitted as the Boar gained the rock; but in quitting he had thrust at his assailant's exposed belly, and the spear had gone home. He landed on a decently flat rock, rolled into a bush, and all parties then resumed stations. The matter now appeared perfectly simple. Only show yourself on the rock and the Boar would come again, expose his vital parts and receive a mortal poke. But he did not fall in with this plan. Nothing could make him respond. He just lay there, and his two assailants hoped he was petering out. But the Boar had always been a source of disappointments and surprises. He simply would not come now, and he had a surprise yet in store. One man on the rock and the other below, they discussed him openly and to his face. They peered at him, did everything except take his temperature or apply a stethoscope. Yet he lay and heaved and looked done-in.

A cold, stark, bleak fact now dawned on them. If the Boar would not come to them, they must go to him—by the little path and in single file. That was the only possible way. There was some slight wrangling ere the senior man asserted his rights to lead this venture, and the younger gave over the idea of a military funeral when juniors lead their seniors.

So holding his spear short, for there was no room to hold it any other way, the senior squeezed round the rock and again faced the Boar.

What followed was a blur and a flurry, and can only be outlined in a general sort of way. The Boar may or may not have been petering out, but there was any amount of peter still left to run. In a moment he was on his feet again. A spear-thrust (believed to have been

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ineffective) was delivered. The spearman turned and fled. The Boar followed. The man could not go fast enough. The two emerged, with the Boar's forefeet planted one on each shoulder, and their two cheeks laid lovingly together. This only for the space of a moment. The ground did not permit of such endearments. The second man lunged in. None of them could keep their feet, and the trio rolled crashing down the slope.

When they had finished rolling, the Boar was found to be dead, the two men a trifle bruised and thorny, and one of them with his cheek smeared with blood—not his own.

Swiftly they got to horse, for a hot sun and funk had parched them speechless. And they rode in on their companions, who were wondering what had happened to them, but making a hearty breakfast nevertheless. These vain babblers, while the True Heroes drank and regained their speech, poured out their trivial footling tale of six boar killed that day—wretched mice, one of 32½ inches, one of 31, two of 29, one still smaller, and one that would probably cost someone a gold mohur. Under ordinary circumstances five rideable pig in one day would have been marked with a red letter in the annals of the X Tent Club, whose total bag for a year seldom exceeded and usually fell short of thirty.

And so when these others had said their say, the two paladins gently broke to them the fact that they were late for breakfast because they had had business with the Birkatheli Boar, whom, after a slight affair on foot, they had killed.

Truth compels me to add that this announcement was received with what might have been called shouts of tipsy derision. But the X Tent Club drank nothing but

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tea. One or two of its more profligate members went in for lime-juice pegs. Drinks were not a common charge. Still the scoffers scoffed. They were, however, invited to come and see, and to bring Dhanni along as corroborative evidence. And when they arrived at the hill and had clambered up fifty feet and saw the Boar lying against a boulder, below a swathe of flattened bushes and broken saplings, they allowed that the half of the matter had not been told them.

The dimensions of the Boar and his weight were so great that I dare not give them here. Some faint idea of his size may be gathered when I say that when he was got down on to the plain and laid out reverently (no other word quite meets the case), Dhanni's legs receded from their position as principal features in the landscape and faded away into mere pipe-stems.

Two spears were set up at heel and wither, and the Hon. Secretary solemnly placed on record the reading of the tape. The weighing-machine utterly failed to rise to the occasion, and this part of the obsequies had to be deferred till another had been procured.

Eight men staggered away with their burden, trussed up to a young tree which had been cut down for the purpose. Eight more relieved them, and so to the road, where a cart was impressed.

His two slayers fell into a brisk argument as to whom the tushes should go to. He who had poked him when the Boar had mounted the font said that it was only a prick, and could not be counted. He who had staggered from the den in that bloody embrace maintained that he had shut both his eyes, had thrust in self-defence and had probably missed. They agreed that the Boar had actually died of lung trouble rather than spear-thrusts;

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and the trophies were shared, a tush and a trotter going to each, and the head to the mess, of which each was a member.

All this happened in those far-away times classed as 'pre-war,' and I do not think the X Tent Club will mind the yarn being told now.

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III.

THE HUNTING OF NGAGI.

I.

THE people at South Kensington wanted a father gorilla for a 'scene,' one of those picturesque family groups that are so much more edifying to the young idea, though probably of less value as object-lessons in practical hygiene, than the Frightful Flea and his Brobdingnagian companions. One little boy can be vouched for, and there must be lots more like him, whose almost nightly dread is of an encounter adown the glades of dreamland with that fearful symmetry in tinted wax, the Flea that has eaten the Food of the Gods.

Gorillas, though? Could they be featured *au naturel* in so meek and mild a light? It was the full-grown male, the puissant, herculean, gigantic, irresistible ruler of the arboreal roost, whose presence was particularly requested. The others were there already, disunited but accounted for, scattered about in dusty corners of the show-cases. In the family circle it was only the chair of paterfamilias that lacked an occupant, or rather, it was explained, an adequate occupant. Could we undertake to fill it? And photographs, authentic and plentiful, of the family's jungle haunts were a very special need.

We said we would try. The photographs, we thought, we could promise definitely.

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There was one very necessary proviso and preliminary : the Permis de Chasse.

Unlike his western prototype (*Gorilla gorilla*), the Highland species (*Gorilla beringeri*) is not, so far as is definitely known at present, to be found in British territory, his only recognised home being the Belgian Congo. The Belgian Government, we knew, was getting chary of extending to strangers facilities for acquiring specimens of its rarer fauna even in the *bona fide* interests of science ; and who could really blame them, seeing that not many years ago one party had construed such requirements as justifying a bag of fourteen gorillas in about as many weeks ?

One permit for one gorilla was all we meant therefore to try for, and since the Museum appeared so keen about it, it seemed up to them to make a move in the proper direction. But their application, presented through the Foreign Office, brought no reply, or none that reached ourselves.

One of us who was going on that trip was a nephew of the Belgian Ambassador to England—at least the Ambassadress was his aunt. That seemed a string it would be folly not to pull, so we pulled it. Baron Moncheur replied with a letter that we took straight over to Brussels with us. We collected others—one to Millington-Drake, First Secretary of our Legation, who was indefatigable in his attempts to get us what we wanted.

We interviewed the Colonial Secretary and Finance Minister (M. Houtart), who was friendly. Handed on by him to the Directeur Général du Congo (M. Arnold), we had a frostier reception. We suspected from his demeanour in our presence that M. Arnold was at least no Anglophile. He did not temporise or deal in diplomatic ambiguities. He told us we could not have the permit.

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Undaunted, we sought out others in high places. The Secretary of Agriculture, who was courteous and did his best. Categorically we dealt with all the portfolio-holders in the Belgian Cabinet. Politeness everywhere, but no permit.

A last chance. King Albert?

We meditated our angle of approach, called again upon the Finance Minister's Secretary, collected all our courage and asked if he thought the King would give us a private audience. Perhaps it was the multiplicity of our introductions; perhaps because Belgium (a fact the King himself was to point out to us) is the only really democratic country that retains a crowned head; perhaps the stunning effect of our sheer effrontery; perhaps, and most probably, a combination of all these factors, plus the accident of our luck being well in that day, but the Secretary heard, nodded, left the room, came back and announced that the King would receive us no later than ten o'clock the following morning.

King Albert discoursed to us engagingly. He spoke of gorillas and of the Great War. He made it clear he was not giving us permission now to go after a gorilla. Belgium, we must understand, was a particularly democratic place. It was not his business, but that of others, to sign death-warrants, even of gorillas. He would do what he could.

It looked hopeful, and we left it at that.

But a few days later we received in England a letter from our Embassy refusing permission, and indicating that further attempts would be useless. The knell of all our hopes, and the Museum's too, as they agreed when we made a final call there before sailing.

Weeks afterwards the mail the post-office handed out

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to us at Kigona on the shores of Lake Tanganyika simply electrified us.

BRITISH EMBASSY, BRUSSELS,
December 5, 1926.

DEAR COLONEL FENN,—Mr Knatchbull-Hugessen, who is Chargé d'Affaires in the absence of the Ambassador, asks me to send you herewith copy of a note which we have received from the Belgian Government stating that they have granted you permission to kill one gorilla, provided it is shot outside the limits of the Parc National Albert.

I presume that you already know of this decision, as it is presumably due to your personal efforts, but we think it well to send you a copy of the note.

Yours sincerely,

(Sgd.) E. MILLINGTON-DRAKE.

There were doubts at first whether this was more than an extremely elaborate diplomatic courtesy, whether, in fact, it had much material value. Was there actually and as a matter of fact even that one single gorilla extant for us to locate and, having located, declare authorised war against, outside the forbidden confines of the Parc National Albert?

Nobody had reported one, but we felt he must be there. In camp that night we drank two royal toasts.

It was three months before we were able to put that permit to its use. None of the few Europeans we met had ever seen a gorilla. Many tribes of the natives, having the appearance and habits of the beast described to them, denied its existence. Though we ranged over large tracts of the Belgian Congo, inquiring perpetually for news of our quarry, only the dwellers on the lower mountain slopes around Lake Kivu were able to identify

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the creature we spoke of. They knew of it, or some of them did, as the almost legendary 'Ngagi.' Very few had encountered him; most of those who had not disbelieved in him altogether.

Then we met a Belgian official who gave us good advice. The White Fathers, he said, from whom we could always count on a welcome should we visit Lulenga, their mission at the foot of the Virunga Volcanoes, were learned in gorilla lore. Lulenga was well inside the Reserve, but what of that? The Fathers had other stations outside it, and were great travellers.

Eventually we did get to Lulenga. Nothing could transcend the courtesy and hospitality which there greeted us. One expects every white man you meet in the African bush to ask you to dinner, unless your camp is nearer, when, of course, you will ask him. But these Belgian padres did more, they insisted on our regarding their excellently equipped house as a hotel. Their establishment was well organised and run in every department, but what we admired most was their wonderful garden. Every useful plant and vegetable, all the palatable and thirst-quenching fruits we ever remembered meeting in the tropics, seemed to grow there.

There was a diversion at dinner the first evening. We had hardly sat down when noises suggestive of a riot in the outer kitchen disturbed us. The butler and his acolytes forgot their training and dashed out to investigate. Cries and screams arose. Then, unmistakably, a roar, a chorus of roars. Pandemonium throughout the mission domain. A lion, some would have it several lions, actually inside the boma, or stockade. There they were, between the padres' quarters and the out-houses. The Fathers jumped for Verey pistols, half a dozen hissing flares lit up the murk and turmoil. We others had snatched

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rifles and torches, and tumbled already down the verandah steps. No lions could we see, with the light behind us. But there was something padding to and fro just beyond the circle of firelight. The roars, resonant and blood-curdling, were only twenty yards away. They shook the house.

" Do come back inside ! " the Fathers shouted.

Morning revealed a break in the boma, and the mission flock minus a brace of goats.

That was a trifle. Lately, two native converts had fallen victims in another such raid.

II.

Gorillas ? Yes, there were plenty. Up above there, in the country of the mist. Very occasionally they came down to the low levels, and more than once in the last decade it had happened that natives had been killed quite close to the mission. Not dangerous if you leave them alone ? That was certainly not true of these gorillas, the males anyway. They always attack man. They pick him up and pull his arms and legs off, as the nastier kind of little boy would treat a fly.

Before the new game laws were passed, the Fathers had often hunted gorillas on their own account. The females were only aggressive when themselves were cornered or their offspring visibly in danger ; but the old one always, as you say, nine times out of ten, attacks. You must shoot quickly.

One of the Fathers had only lately returned from another station, Katana, at the south-western corner of the lake. Nine months before his departure a big gorilla, he told us, came down from the mountain and made a terrific onslaught on the first party of natives he met.

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There were three of them, and fortunately they carried spears. Two he killed and dismembered, a lucky spear-thrust from the third revenged them. There were many gorillas still on Katana mountain. Was Katana in the Reserve, the Parc National Albert ? No, well outside.

III.

The month was March (1927), and for weeks we had been wandering, camping and shooting, in the plains between the Rucheru and Ruindi Rivers, our headquarters seldom more than three days march (fifty miles or less) north of Lake Kivu.

Our base was Kisenyi, the old German station at the north-eastern corner of the lake, and at the foot of the Virunga Volcanoes. Here all our heavy stores were deposited. Also, in trustworthy keeping, a much cherished dog, our Great Dane ' Tiger,' convalescent, as we hoped, from tick fever.

As the crow flies, Katana, a place now become of great interest to us, was eighty miles south-west of Kisenyi. There were four in our party, and one of the four was a woman. Not all of us could clamber up those cloud-wrapped mountains to try conclusions with that gorilla. Not after the Fathers' report, anyway. We must split up, then. Only two of us would make for Katana. The others could amuse themselves as we had all been doing heretofore, and meet us in a month's time—that is, if we had got the gorilla. If we had not, the junction of our forces would have to be postponed.

This arrangement did not please everybody. Our fair companion particularly. But how could we possibly have taken her along ? Bill, our big American, was one of the pair who, plus boys, baggage and many smelly indigenes,

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embarked on a steel barge at the Kisenyi jetty. For two and a half days a small launch kept us in tow, chugging steadily southwards down the lake. We were dumped out upon a beach near the Katana mission settlement.

Signs of trouble were already discernible among our forces. The boys, it seemed, always curious as to our plans, were dead against this particular adventure, so far as they could envisage its nature and objective. We heard them grumbling among themselves, then one or two spokesmen came forward and laid a complaint—several complaints, in fact.

Firstly, they averred and solemnly asseverated that there was no such animal as 'Ngagi.' The name—yes, that existed, but that which it pertained to was fabulous, a chimæra. Secondly, the country ahead was a very bad country. The people so foolish as to live there were no good. Thirdly, it was well known that all strangers who ventured into these parts died of cold. Fourthly, if by miracle preserved from freezing to death, starvation killed them. Anyway, if they were going they must have more money.

These arguments did not surprise us. We had often heard their like when lesser dangers threatened. We could deal with this sort of thing, but sensed further and graver troubles ahead.

Our landing beach, we found, was actually within the boundaries of a new coffee plantation owned by the Prince de Ligne. That moment found the Prince on the brink of home leave and very much tied up with eleventh hour affairs, but his manager (M. François) offered to do anything he could. We wanted thirty-four carriers, did we? Well, he would try to produce them, but his hopes were not roseate. Two days of hoping left us where we were. Very kindly he lent us sixteen of his own men, who took

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us as far as a Government experimental farm four hours away, dumped their loads and skedaddled without waiting to be paid. That did not surprise us either.

There was a superintendent here, a former pilot of the Belgian Flying Corps. A true comrade he proved, and most hospitable. It was suggested we should wait a little, forty-eight hours it was, and then he produced ten men. They looked more reliable than the last bunch.

Misfortune, in the guise of ' 'flu,' had meanwhile overtaken Bill. The best plan seemed to be a determined dash ahead without him in case no further carriers arrived (we had not really far to go now), and then to send the same men back for Bill.

Luckily we collected here four Batwa pigmies, who were quite willing to join our hunting party, but not in the least prepared to carry anything whatsoever, barring their own or our weapons.

Batwa, it should here be made clear, are not true pigmies, but rather a taller type, who live on the verge of the forest belt. The males average about four feet eight inches in height, their women considerably less. They live almost entirely by and for hunting, have no villages, but construct temporary huts of leaves when they wish to use them, which happens infrequently. Far from eschewing contact with their neighbours, and thereby displaying their most marked trait of divergence from true pigmy psychology, they show no anxiety to keep themselves *to* themselves, have acquired a taste for luxuries, and barter the spoils of their incessant hunting with the dwellers of the plains, receiving in exchange vegetable cloth and other commodities.

They will pursue any and every species of big game for the meat and the skin, both of which are the accepted currency of barter. But though they prize gorilla meat

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beyond all other food, it is only an occasional female or young one that falls to their bow and spear, or more usually to the cunningly laid snares which they are past-masters in contriving. Fearless enough of any other animal, they let old man gorilla well alone.

The leader of this quartette appeared incredibly old, wrinkled and wise. Nimble he was, too, and nonchalant, and we called him Socrates, which seemed to please him.

We had been climbing steadily since leaving the lake. Our Belgian friend told us that his farm, where the Batwa joined us, was 5500 feet above sea-level. Above that the mountains, swathed in mist, seemed to rise almost perpendicularly.

At once we entered the zone of heavy timber, so heavy indeed it seemed miraculous that such trees could find foothold on a rock-face whose gradient was next-door to that of a precipice. With hours of stiff climbing, though, we noticed the trees becoming smaller. At 8000 feet they thinned out rapidly and vanished. We stood on the verge of the bamboo thickets; to left, to right, above us, nothing but bamboos, densely set, but not too much so for a low thick-growing undergrowth to warn us that not yet was the going to be made easier.

This was the gorilla country, as all reports agreed, but for the time being we pressed on. We might have to stay here a month, and wanted to get our bearings right, and some approximate notion of landmarks. A thousand feet higher the bamboos petered out, the upper edge of the belt defined as mathematically almost as the lower.

Beyond, the vegetation was the oddest mixture of familiar European forms—bracken, heather, honeysuckle, blackberries; with African montane growths—euphorbias, saxifrages, sun-dews, bizarre of silhouette, gargantuan in their height and spread. Even homely and recognisable

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species showed an exotic tendency to overshoot the limits of seemly development.

It was a curious land to sojourn in, as we did for some weeks. Providence did not appear to have intended it for human occupation. Though a sparse populace inhabited the plateau on the farther side of the range, no natives of any sort lived on these mountains ; few except the pigmies would even venture there.

Nearly always it rained, and on the rare days when the deluge held off a thick white blanket of mist lay over everything long after dawn and before dusk. Where we were, it did not actually freeze at night. The thermometer marked a constant 45, but to us it seemed colder. Frequently in camp, when the rain put a stopper on our excursions, we maintained a fire all day merely to keep warmth in our bones. We were as forlorn and miserable as two bank clerks in quest of week-end adventure might feel if marooned in mid-November on the shoulder of Helvellyn. If it was this sort of climate gorillas throve upon, Regent's Park should have no terrors for them. Probably it was more a question of food. But more of that later.

We had been climbing for hours, had left the forest belt behind us and penetrated the bamboo thickets for some distance, when our porters from the farm downed their loads and intimated bluntly that they did not propose going any farther.

The pigmies were ahead, on the gorilla trail somewhere in the higher thickets.

The expedition, now consisting of one white man, his boy and the cook (Bill, still *hors de combat,* being miles in the rear of the farm), stood scowling at the recalcitrant porters while waiting for the stragglers to come up.

The bamboos above us parted, and two pigmies dropped

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down from a rock. The trail we sought had been found and followed. There was a gorilla family quite close ahead.

The cook had his orders to pitch camp immediately.

We took the trail. Another pigmy had dropped back to escort us. The three little men carried their spears, the boy the rifle. The white man's weapon was a camera.

The first unusual thing we noticed was a smell. At first a faint half-caught ghost of a smell, just a musky taint that seemed different among the usual and familiar compost of aromatic essences, earthy, vegetable, or recognisably animal. Gradually the taint thickened till the air seemed loaded with it. Rank and musky, like the dug earth of an old dog fox.

The pigmy guide pointed. A huge hand-print in the mud. Right hand, the fingers bent over.

We were scrambling through bracken, very thick and tall. Just ahead something barked, short and sharp, like a terrier. The noise did not suggest a big animal, but the pigmies' attitude told us it was Ngagi that had given tongue.

Clutching the camera to his chest, Ngagi's pursuer tried to worm his way round in a half-circle through the tangle. That bark was so near, he might get his picture. But it was no use, the bracken was impenetrable. In a business-like fashion, one pigmy began to cut away at the tangle with his spear.

There was another bark. Not short and sharp. Deep-throated, angry. Better have the rifle back, so it was grabbed quickly, in exchange for the camera.

Every stroke of the spears told, and in one minute the pigmies had opened a portal in the wall of bracken. Crouching and creeping, we entered almost at once a sort of tunnel through the bamboos, not open to the sky, its

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roof perhaps four feet six inches above the ground. That moment was not auspicious, though, for taking measurements or notes.

We had not even decided which way it was expedient to turn, right or left, when the doubt was decided for us in no uncertain fashion. An infernal yell seemed to blast our ear-drums, to set every leaf and twig of the green smother through which we strove to peer aquiver. Shambling and scrambling down the accursedly dark passage, a full-grown male gorilla projected himself upon us like a hairy thunderbolt. He seemed to bowl and lollop along the ground like a ham-strung Hercules, 'leading' like a prizefighter with a huge left paw outflung, while the knuckles of his right hand helped the bowed legs to lever along his huge top-heavy bulk. That suggests a not too speedy progress, a deduction not borne out by the facts. He was on the top of us, seemed towering over us, in a couple of seconds, when one of us fired, from the hip—no time to get up the rifle, and there was not room anyway. Yelling still, he checked, lumbered round and hurtled back the way he came.

Someone produced a measuring tape. Three yards had separated us, no more; it had, indeed, looked less. The pigmies had stood like rocks, their spear-points advanced bayonet fashion. In the rear, the boy still clutched the camera. His teeth chattered, but he spoke. Only one comment, many times repeated. "Funya picture wapi!" he said, "Funya picture wapi!" The English of that is, "Take pictures? I don't think!"

Two minutes' start was all our further preparations gave him. Whether he was badly or lightly hit we had no real means of judging, but we assumed not very seriously, as the blood trail was slight, and when the tunnel forked (we ran into a perfect maze of them) the pigmies picked up

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his traces merely by the freshly bent leaves and bamboo shoots. Heads almost on the ground, working like setters, they scuttled along at a pace we could hardly keep up with. One was thankful that weeks of jungle travel had tanned knees and forearms to the toughness of leather, for our progress was mostly on all fours. Trailing a rifle that way along those confounded tunnels was the devil, but we kept it up for four hours.

Soon the thicket became a labyrinth of these corridors, with here and there a clearing marking a sort of Clapham Junction of them. There were thrills when the pursuit halted at such spots. True, we were chasing Ngagi, but he might so easily have turned the tables on us, and who could say by which of these approaches he might not at any moment turn, outflanking us, surprising us perhaps from the rear ? Up hill and down, sometimes almost perpendicularly, the tunnels ran, but our pigmies never gave us a real rest. At the junctions they had to cast round for the trail, and not seldom at such times they pointed out to us rough nests in the bamboo and bracken. Usually there were indications that Ngagi, whom report recommended as a cleanly beast, intended to sleep elsewhere in future, and the pigmies said it was so ; he never used a nest, or one of this type, more than one night.

What mystified us were the large balls or pads of crumpled bracken that we sometimes stumbled upon in the corners of these lairs. With gestures, the pigmies explained. Ngagi had manufactured those to sit on. We disbelieved this at the time, but later had ocular demonstration of its truth. Here and there were flung down handfuls of chewed bamboo, a diet to which Ngagi is prone, but varies with other vegetable delicacies that we identified later.

From time to time, at various distances ahead or

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abreast of us as we struggled to catch him up, Ngagi roared his anger, and we would catch glimpses through the bamboo lattice of some solid and quite decent-sized tree shaken like an aspen. The pigmies told us he always did this when annoyed.

But we never saw him.

By signs, Socrates intimated that he would try a new dodge. Squatting on his haunches, he barked. Then his lips emitted a stream of animal sounds, a species of monkey chatter. It sounded derisive and insulting, and he told us afterwards it was meant to be. After a time Ngagi answered, in a language somewhat similar. But he kept himself hidden, swallowing all the pigmy's insults.

We thought we saw him. No, a much smaller beast, one of his wives. The challenge of Socrates had ceased ; our crawling progress was being silently conducted. Clearly she knew nothing of the alarms and excursions of the earlier afternoon, continuing unconcernedly to munch bamboo shoots. For a minute we kept her in good view. Still without catching our scent, she ambled leisurely into obscurity.

Raindrops fell pattering, and thickened to the usual steady drizzle. The pigmies ceased work automatically. Rain always had that effect upon them, we found.

It was nightfall when we made camp. But a note, an urgent one, had to go back to Bill, and braving the night terrors of the bush, a porter went loping down the track with it. An hour or so after daybreak Bill staggered up, shaky but eager.

Socrates and his minions took up the trail again where we had dropped it. But we saw no more of our first gorilla, nor heard of him. Crawling all day through those vile tunnels, we drew an utter blank.

For a week we hunted, seldom without striking some

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trail the pigmies pronounced fairly fresh. Many times we heard gorillas. On the third day we saw some, three or four females and several baby gorillas, but no head of the family. Clearly he was in the offing somewhere, and the pigmies went off down a trail that proved to be his. We stuck to this for hours.

At last we saw him. The bamboos grew more thinly here than was usual. Twenty yards ahead of us there was Ngagi, lurching irresolute in the shadows, grumbling and snarling, sensing pursuit, his great head turning this way and that.

Spotting us, he launched himself straight upon us at full gallop, raising that ghastly battle yell. He was not our old enemy, a shade less ponderous in height and build. A possible shot, but not yet a good one ; as he came on we could only see bits of him through the tangle. With ten yards covered, some premonition of special danger seemed to halt him. We had not moved, but he lumbered round and the bamboos swallowed him up.

Hot on his tracks we followed. But it was no good. " Gone away " was the pigmies' report. On the morrow, it became clear that wives and babies, the entire family, had gone too. For days we cast round, and neither saw nor heard a trace of gorilla. Even the gorilla odour seemed lifting from these abandoned haunts of theirs.

We saw nothing for it but to break camp and renew our operations from a fresh centre, and Socrates and his fellow-gnomes confirmed this view. Our last lot of porters had decamped. Socrates volunteered to get over this difficulty, and was as good as his word, collecting a carrying squad from a village on the other side of the range. These were all women.

His idea, we found, was that we should make the village they came from, Kalongi, our next camp. It was hardly,

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indeed, a village, as we found on getting there after a climb, down and up, of six hours, only a tiny cluster of huts. It stood on the top of a sort of table mountain considerably lower than the peaks of the main ridge. At this height (9000 feet) the tangle of bamboo and bracken we had got so used to formed the only vegetation. We could perceive that it was likely gorilla country. Colder, though, and wetter than our last camp, or so it seemed to us.

IV.

We repeated the old procedure. On the trail at six, and sticking to it till dusk. But it was heart-breaking work, scrambling and slithering in the cold and the wet, continuous grumbles threatening mutiny from the boys, increasing doubts as to whether that permit was ever going to be much use to us. There were gorilla runs in plenty, but never a fresh scent along them for the Batwa to pick up. If there had been, they would have found it.

But on the third night, just as we were about to turn in, Socrates arrived and demanded immediate audience. Quite excited, for him, so we guessed his news was good.

One of his men had located another whole family of Ngagi. We could catch up with them to-morrow morning easily.

At 6 A.M. we were off again, marching and climbing. Three or four hours of this began to get on our nerves. For we found nothing. Were these little devils fooling us? Some Africans, if they perceive you want a thing very badly, promise it to you, knowing perfectly well you will not get it.

It was almost the last straw when Socrates, without any suggestion from us, halted his party. All squatted deliberately at their ease. Dinner-time, said Socrates

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This had not happened before, and we expostulated; dinner, we urged, could wait.

But they said no, and munched their cold sweet potatoes. Why hurry? The gorilla were quite close. We decided to be philosophic and have our own lunch.

In twenty minutes the little men were on the move again. We struck a tremendously thick patch of bamboos, where the pigmies used their spears. We saw daylight through the fronds. The edge of the thicket won, Socrates stopped and pointed.

Below us, in a kind of dell of more open bush, the black shapes of two female gorillas moved slowly among the tangle. Obviously they neither saw, heard, nor smelt us, but quietly browsed, mainly on all fours, occasionally reaching up to gather, abstractedly, some tender shoot among the higher foliage. Another joined the party from the thicket beyond, a fourth. Their leisurely rolling gait suggested bears rather than apes.

With his spear Socrates pointed again.

Two balls of black fur rolled into the field of vision. Baby gorillas—males, he said. They fought like puppies, buffeting and scratching, squeaked, barked in a puppyish fashion.

Unseen and unsuspected, we watched this scene for twenty minutes. If only we had had the camera! But the wretched Ramasan was skulking a full mile behind us.

Cautiously we worked round for a nearer view. Then we saw that one of the females, glimpses of whose silhouette had puzzled us, bore on her shaggy back a still younger family, not one but two much smaller infants. We could see their so human small fingers clutching her fur, their little eyes blinking even.

The bigger gorilla children were still at their skylarking. One of them lost his temper and bit his brother in the

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shoulder as if he meant it. The joy-squeaks became shrill and angry cries. Their mother dropped the shred of bark she was nibbling and scrambled over to her offspring, pulled them apart and actually boxed the aggressor's ears.

That was too much for the equanimity of an audience that had crouched as still as statues for half an hour. Somebody moved, and the female who had been steadily munching her way towards us looked up, got our wind probably in the same moment, and throwing round her head gave one short sharp bark.

There was instant commotion, a chorus of grunts and squeals, and the whole family scrambled to cover in the thicket. From that retreat the warning bark was once or twice repeated.

Out of the bush at the other end of the glade came an answering roar. No mistake about that signal. It was the old man's.

A hundred yards away the bamboos parted, and there he was. He could probably see us, but we were not sure. Anyway, he made straight for us for twenty-five yards, then reared up, erect on his bowed legs, and with one colossal arm against a tree-trunk kept his balance. He saw us now all right. Balefully he glared at us with his little red eyes, bared huge yellow fangs, snarled horribly, roared his defiance.

We had to shoot now, if we were going to, but we could have wished the range a little closer. It was Bill's turn, and he took a double .475 Express. It was a heavy weapon for an accurate standing shot, especially with one's wrist unsteadied after four hours' mountaineering. Obstinately, though, he would not take the lighter Mannlicher.

Bill fired, and the gorilla crashed to earth. But in two seconds he was up again, had turned, vanished. We tore our way to the tree, but it took us ten minutes to reach it.

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There was a lot of blood. Frothy, a lung shot; pity Bill had not taken the Mannlicher. The chase might be long. For an hour and a half we followed it. Every few minutes the mountain echoed with his roars, but we saw no glimpse of Ngagi.

Then he nearly got us. We were in a tunnel maze again, and at a junction we were just deciding which line he had taken when the battle-yell was raised—*behind us*. Down another tunnel he came like an express train, screaming. No time to sight on that target; he was five yards away when Bill let off at him anyhow. It turned him. Once more we followed.

Another hour, and Socrates checked. There was the gorilla, climbing laboriously up a half-fallen tree. His huge left arm dangled useless; Bill's last shot had broken it. Poor old Ngagi, he was clearly done for. Blood still oozed from his side. He peered at us, his little eyes dull now, no longer red and fiery. His snarl was half-hearted.

What brutes we felt! That Mannlicher bullet to his heart was a relief.

He toppled, started to roll downhill, met, luckily, a tree strong enough to hold up his enormous bulk.

For the first time since they had been in our company the pigmies, when the gorilla's huge black body came tumbling and crashing down the slope, vanished. They were not so sure he was dead as we were, and better than ourselves, no doubt, knew Ngagi's potentialities for last minute mischief in his death flurry, if any imprudent or excited enemy chanced within the immense reach of his arms.

He never moved again, however. Two minutes passed, and the little men crept out of their hiding-places. They were vastly excited, gabbling and chuckling, as they helped us lever Ngagi's tremendous frame up into a

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sitting position against a tree—no light task, even for our combined forces. We photographed him, supine and then upright. Weight-taking and height measurements were most difficult, but with much trouble and many shifts we established the weight of the complete carcase as 450 pounds, and height as 5 feet 8 inches—it would have been far more, of course, if his leg-stretch had not been negligible in comparison with the tremendous arm-reach and chest dimensions. The span of his outstretched arms proved to be 8 feet 3 inches, his chest measurement 5 feet 2 inches, biceps 18 inches, circumference of fingers 4 inches.

The body odour was almost overpowering when we began to handle him. However, we had been getting gradually inured to the strange gorilla smell in the last few weeks. All the lairs and runs we had inspected had the taint about them in greater or less degree of strength. For weeks, too, it was to remain with us. That precious burden, the skin, was to impregnate with its aroma everything in camp; even the boys, hardened by nature as one would have thought to smells of any description, complained of it, and it survived incessant unrollings, sun-dryings and the curative precautions we lost no opportunity of taking. Warned beforehand, we were careful never to let salt touch the hide, and relied mainly on perpetual scourings of the inner cuticle with wood-ash and formalin, and for that Rowland Ward was afterwards to thank us. A salt-cured hide gave no end of unnecessary trouble, having to lie in soak for months and then receive further treatment before mounting, and there were grave risks that its natural pigmentation would suffer.

Dead, Ngagi looked formidable enough, but no longer ferocious. It was a different countenance from that

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horrific contorted mask that had glared at us in open-mouthed shrieking savagery during those terrifying rushes that had more than once sent our hearts into our mouths. These was no menace, only a sort of grotesque pathos, in the relaxed jaw, the slobbering lip. Except for the enormous development of the canines, we observed that the teeth conformed roughly, in formation and disposition, to the human type. The chest and upper diaphragm, from the deltoid muscle to just above the navel, were completely hairless, the skin as smooth as a young negress's. The marked development in the male of mammæ and nipples was peculiar.

From the tip of the low corrugated forehead the skull sloped sheer back to the crown; but we were surprised to find here an admixture of auburn—almost red—hair, noticeable amongst the black when ruffled during examination. That on the arms was much like bear fur—long, coarse and black. On the legs the fur was much shorter, and grey-black in colour. Upon back and shoulders the covering dwindled to a sparse growth of quite short hair, on the upper part of the back silver-white—the most marked characteristic of the male—the lower half matching the grey-black of the legs. A noticeable feature was the high ridge of bone running from back to front along the skull, on top of this a pad of gristly fat, at least three inches thick, a characteristic which only appears in the male gorilla when nearly full-grown according to the Batwa. We had seen no reference to this feature in previous specifications of *G. beringeri*, and it may, of course, help to mark off this specimen from a new area as a fresh sub-species. Skinning the head, always a difficult process, was made doubly so by the existence of this adornment.

A very careful examination showed both the epidermis

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and fur to be perfectly clean. There was no trace whatever of any form of body parasite, no ticks, or even fleas. Examining the organs after skinning and dissection, we noted a similar immunity. Ngagi seems a singularly healthy animal. He bore, apart from the wounds of this last encounter, one scar, his right ear having been badly bitten and mutilated in some jungle rough-and-tumble. We surmised there may have been a female gorilla at the bottom of it. The pigmies guessed his age as forty, said he was a good specimen, but not the biggest they had seen. By common report, Ngagi might live to a hundred.

We took blood-slides, having been asked to do so to enable later investigation to be made as to the presence or otherwise of sleeping sickness trypanosomes in the blood of the gorilla. Also we removed the appendix (this very large—18 inches long). To skin the entire beast, barring removal of the skull and flesh of hands and feet, which had to wait over till morning, took us till dusk.

There was not much sleep for anyone in the camp that night. Both the Batwa and our own boys celebrated the occasion by drinking ' Pombe ' (banana beer), and singing and dancing while the gorilla meat was being cooked. This latter delicacy, though the pigmies relish it so highly, our own boys would not touch at any price, so we made it up to them with the present of a goat—price nine francs. For the Batwa, it should be said that the prospect and indeed the promise (it had been a condition of their agreeing to co-operate with us) of being able to eat the gorilla when it was bagged had been the main instrument in attaching them to our service. Without them we should have been lucky indeed to catch one glimpse of a gorilla. We did not therefore grudge them the long anticipated delights of this orgy. So excited did they grow as the preparations for the banquet progressed that it was only

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with the utmost difficulty we managed to safeguard all the bones in the general mêlée ; but this we did, down to the ultimate phalange, cleaned, packed, numbered and listed them.

V.

We had done what we came up here to do. True, there was still lacking the photographic memoranda we had so hoped Fortune would allow us to procure and carry away, those snapshots we had resolved to get of gorilla going undisturbed and unsuspecting about their business in their own way. The family party, for instance, whose behaviour had so enthralled us ; if we had secured and been able to bear off with us a permanent record of that, we felt almost we could have done without our specimen and let the old man go.

Further waiting, however, was impossible. The Batwa were through with the tracking of Ngagi for the time being ; they knew we had no intention of shooting another. Our own servants were anxious to escape from a cold, inhospitable and devil-haunted wilderness, while, truth to tell, we had had just about enough of it ourselves, the natural discomforts of the climate and prolonged physical strain we had undergone having told on everybody. We felt now that it was only the excitement of the chase that had kept us going in the last few days. And we had some good, indeed unique, pictures of the gorilla's home surroundings. One way and another, South Kensington ought to be satisfied.

Other game than gorillas existed on the range, and while never attempting to pursue them, we had taken note of the presence of bamboo elephant, called pigmy elephant by some hunters because they are slightly smaller then the usual low-country type. There were duiker of

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various sorts, bush-buck, leopards and a few vagrant lions. Occasionally we saw a Schweinfurth's chimpanzee, these larger and browner in colour than the common sort. Also colobus monkeys. Both these and the chimp contingents used to make an infernal noise in the early mornings.

Even the elephant and leopard, the Batwa said, would keep out of Ngagi's path, though now and then a leopard would get away with a baby gorilla if the chance offered. Naturally, we were always cross-examining these pigmy guides of ours as to the gorilla's habits, and one way and another we gathered a good deal from them. Some of their statements which we frankly disbelieved at first, we found before leaving Kalongi were perfectly true. That chair-making habit, for instance. Once we saw what must surely have been a cradle. Yes, said Socrates, it was a cradle.

We never detected a full-grown gorilla in the act of climbing a tree as a chimpanzee would do. The females and the babies couched, when not actually on the ground, in shelters only a foot or so above it. The old man invariably slept on the ground floor, his back sometimes to a tree. No full-grown tree in those parts would bear his weight in its upper branches. He would clamber a few steps up a sloping trunk checked in its fall by creepers, to take his bearings and spy out possible enemies, no doubt. Our victim, of course, was doing this when we gave him his *coup-de-grâce*.

Unless interfered with, each gorilla family seems to keep to one stretch of country more or less for good, though covering a good deal of ground in the course of each day. Families presumably split up in the course of Nature, the young males no doubt mating and going off to found families of their own as they grow up. Certainly we never

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saw two full-grown males within miles of each other, and the pigmies said families never mixed, nor did gorillas run in troops, as has been averred.

We made the most careful observations we could of the gorillas' dietary. Undoubtedly bamboo furnishes the main food supply of the mountain species. On all occasions when we watched their feeding they were continually gathering the young shoots, munching and chewing these, and spitting out balls of semi-masticated fibre. Beyond this staple support, they seemed to favour the wild carrot (very like the tame variety), which occurs, patchily, in abundance at these altitudes; the leaves but not the flower of one particular species of Senecio (a yellow one); the bark of a thick vine parasitic on certain of the bigger trees; also the leaves and bark of a large bush unidentifiable by us. Specimens of all these, with their native names recorded, were preserved with care and forwarded to the authorities at Kew.

On the spot, preferring not to trust later memories or impressions that might become blurred, we endeavoured to classify and define the various cries and noises made by gorillas in our hearing. These differed surprisingly.

Firstly, there was the short sharp bark referred to several times in the foregoing narrative, certainly not very loud considering the bulk of the creature producing it, and rather suggestive of the noise a terrier makes when it wants you to throw sticks for it. It seemed clear this was either a warning signal or a note of interrogation, and we observed it was never used when the gorilla was really alarmed.

Secondly, there was the loud snarl, as it might have been a very large and very bad-tempered monkey's, though louder far than any mandrill or baboon could make. If it is possible to render it phonetically, it was

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just 'RRRR-AH!' gradually rising in volume and pitch. The males we followed generally uttered this sound when they found we were on their track.

These snarls were by no means reassuring noises, especially when the exact place they were coming from, though obviously near, was impossible to detect with any accuracy.

They were dulcet utterances, however, in comparison with Ngagi's real war-cry, the infernal yell he put up, and kept up, when charging. This was really terrifying, possibly because it had in it a suggestion of the human. One might expect a frenzied homicidal maniac to raise such a cry if his lungs were capable of it. But no human lungs could compass such a volume of sound. He emits this hullabaloo in one continuous scream, his mouth open to widest extent, huge yellow canines bared, lips drawn right back like a snarling dog's. But there is nothing doggy about the noise.

Far less frightening, but very weird and somewhat unnerving when first heard, is the very loud booming sound he makes by beating his bare chest with cupped hands. When first we heard it, we could not conceive of such a noise (it is not 'drumming' so much as a roaring or reboation) being produced in such a fashion, though this habit of the gorilla's is, of course, well known. One might imagine the sound as being produced by a giant saying, "Bub! Bub! Bub!" hitting his mouth incessantly with his hand while doing so. As he continues, all the air about seems to resound with a hollow thunder. We were in doubt as to whether he used this as a species of challenge or to hearten himself and work himself up for trouble.

There was also a low grumbling noise we noted, usually made by the gorilla when not disturbed, rather like a grumpy old bear.

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The vocal scale of the females was very much more limited. Apart from occasional grunts and grumbles when conversing, as we took them to be doing, with their young or each other, we only heard them bark once or twice, the same sound exactly as the male's number one noise.

The most human gorilla utterance was the squealing of the gorilla children as they quarrelled.

Once or twice we heard the old man roaring in the distance, always just before or after nightfall—quite a different sound from his battle yell, though it seemed to indicate anger. This roar carried for four or five miles, and the natives feared it.

The Kalongi people complained that gorillas sometimes interfered with their crops. Against this they erected a ju-ju, a miniature village of doll's huts in the midst of the plantation, quite useless, as further maraudings proved while we were there.

The Kalongi folk also alleged that more than once the gorillas had taken their women. This is almost certainly untrue. The same fable exists more or less all over primitive Africa. It had been told to us, as to innumerable travellers, in every district where the larger apes are known to inhabit the neighbourhood, baboons, for instance, or chimpanzees, and baboons are practically ubiquitous. But direct evidence of these abductions of women was never to be obtained, nor, in fact, seems ever to have been recorded.

Gorillas certainly kill natives, and that without waiting to be themselves attacked. It has been freely alleged in various scientific journals lately that they do not do so, and are 'perfectly peaceable,' unless wantonly interfered with; but this is simply not the case as regards males, though probably true of the females. The physiognomy

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of these latter bears out such a theory, for they certainly have a much more ingratiating expression, the monstrous bony ridge above the eyes which lends the male countenance such peculiar ferocity being absent in their case. They are also very much smaller, and quite black, might easily be taken, in fact, for an entirely different species of anthropoid.

The Game Warden of Uganda, writing only a few months ago of the habits of *G. beringeri* in his official report, declared them to be perfectly harmless. Dr Dyce Sharp, on the other hand, lecturing to the Zoological Society on *G. gorilla* of the Cameroons, quoted many instances of their ferocious habits. Should the Game Warden of Uganda ever visit Kalongi, he may gain experience of a sort likely to make him change his mind. He might, moreover, make a note of the fact that the Belgian officer detailed a year or two ago to delimit the boundaries of the Parc National Albert on Mts. Mikeno and Karissimbi was himself attacked on four separate occasions by big gorillas, singularly ungrateful ones considering what his business was, and each time had to use his rifle in self-defence.

But what matter this controversy, except in so far as the truth is always desirable, especially in regard to the habits of a beast still comparatively so little known as the gorilla? His race is safe enough from extinction at present. A healthy instinct keeps such neighbours, biped or quadruped, as might be capable of injuring him, out of his way; alien enemies in whom the passion for sport or adventure or even the call of science may induce a willingness to face the hardships and dangers of pursuing him, which are really very considerable, must bide their time, as the Belgian Government suggests, "for many years."

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IV.

SOME PIG-STICKING.

I.

It is nearly, though not totally, irrelevant to the title which heads these lines to state that in December 1917 I stood some few miles west of Cambrai and watched an Indian cavalry regiment stand for upwards of an hour in mass—that is, in very close formation—and endure a shelling at the rate of about one every two minutes. As shellings went it was a mere bagatelle. Infantry would have laughed at it. But, then, infantry would not have been standing in mass. The village and enclosures of Epéhy, however, permitted no other formation for cavalry.

As I watched the regiment and saw bits of it flying skywards, and noted that the slight ripples caused by the bursting shells in its ranks died down almost immediately, I put it down as a good regiment. I knew that it had passed the night cold and hungry, and I observed that it was without lances. It had, in fact, been turned into infantry the day before, had left horses and lances in billets, fourteen miles to the rear, and had arrived in the neighbourhood of Epéhy just as the great German counter-attack of November 1917 had fallen upon our line. Instead, therefore, of taking over trenches (now occupied by Germans), the regiment had been ordered to cease being infantry and to become cavalry again. Its lances

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and horses had been sent up to it. The horses had joined it during the night. But the lances, carried in waggons, had not arrived so quickly. Without them the regiment could not carry out the task allotted to it—that of recapturing the trenches that it was to have occupied, and to occupy them.

As I watched, the lance-waggons arrived. Lances were rapidly distributed, but not rapidly enough to serve the extreme urgency of that moment. For the rear troops of the regiment had their lances thrown to them from the waggon as they moved past it.

Away went the four squadrons, glad of a chance at last and of a gallop.

With them went one hog-spear. This and the use it was put to a few minutes later saves me from total irrelevance. It had been carried by an orderly for just three years in France, and he now followed his officer, and their hopes were high.

The going was fairly good and unimpeded by wire. The trough of the shallow valley permitted column of squadrons and a fast gallop.

There were Germans and German machine-guns on both sides of the valley, but a fast-moving regiment (coming your way) has an unsettling effect on markmanship and is singularly easy to miss. So the regiment paid no attention to them, but thundered along towards the line of trenches which it had been ordered to take. It did take it, though no one could explain afterwards quite how the Germans' wire was first negotiated.

Part of this trench-line was a sunken road, and into this 200 out of the 400 horses were bundled. The remaining horses had either to stand outside or to be sent back along those two miles. They were sent back. But as 200 horses led rearwards by 50 men are not so terrifying

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a sight as a regiment going fast and forwards, all these horses were shot down, and most of the men with them.

Part of the trench-line was ordinary trench. The officer followed by the orderly with the hog-spear cleared this and also our own old wire beyond it. At the moment a German officer was his objective, and as he rode at him the German held up his hands. The Britisher immediately raised his sword-point, whereupon two things happened in quick succession. The German whipped out a pistol and shot the officer dead. The orderly ran the German through the throat with the hog-spear.

The charge of the six hundred at Balaclava earned an ode from a laureate and some fame. The charge of the four hundred in front of Cambrai earned neither—not even a mention. It was a tiny incident occurring amidst many greater ones.

The name of the regiment was the 2nd Bengal Lancers, a regiment not unknown in the best pig-sticking circles farther East.

The German officer killed on this occasion was not, however, the first pig slain in France. But of this more anon.

II.

Members of the B. Tent Club were rather a ragged lot. Neither by green coat-collar nor by brass button did they advertise their membership. Of these emblems indeed they sometimes spoke, but only after a particularly good day when iced beer took the bit from their imaginations. But as you cannot have green collars or brass buttons without coats, nothing came of it. The B. Tent Club never wore coats. They took rather a pride in boots that would let the water out after a swim after pig, and in large sun-hats which looked like decomposed beehives,

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but which protected their heads from the sun above and the hard ground below. Their gear, however, was sound to the last stitch, and their saddle flaps, by a gentle application of castor-oil with the ball of the thumb, felt like damp blotting-paper. The subject of "fox-hunting as compared with pig-sticking" was never allowed at table.

The B. Tent Club was run by a jovial young civilian who was district magistrate and a full private in the local volunteers. He used to show us with pride a bayonet and belt; and his military duties appeared to begin and end with this. Every week-end during the months of March, April and May our tents used to rise up in shady groves, ten, twenty and thirty miles away from military cantonments and the magistrate's court. Where we hunted, there he judged. When we finished our morning's hunting (6 A.M. to noon) and stood easy for a few hours, he went straight to his *al fresco* court, and at 3 P.M., when I used to come out to cool my horses' bits in water before saddling up, the low burble of petition-reading and the murmurous flow of false evidence were still proceeding. Yet at 4 P.M. that jovial civilian was in the saddle and ready to conduct operations till dark. Insatiable litigant though the native of India is, those long journeys in pursuit of a nomadic magistrate must have been a strong deterrent even to the most litigious. Our friend used blithely to remark that that was why he did it, and that sport was quite a secondary matter. Certainly he knew and was known in every hole and corner of his district. And no man could tell when and where he would turn up. He has now reached the eminence of one of the highest office stools, but he still exchanges it for something made of pig-skin, and teaches the young entry how to go and how to infuse a dash of lightsomeness into a service which sometimes takes itself rather seriously.

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The rains had started early, and we looked on the season's hunting as over. But there was an expiring flicker in a gaol—rather an unusual scene for a hunt. The rain had come down so heavily and continuously that all the pig-coverts were flooded out. A wild pig is an excellent swimmer, but he is not a fish. So he had to quit his home in river-bed and marsh-land and take to drier ground. The gaol, which was on the outskirts of the native city, had been cleared for cleaning and repairs. Its doors stood open. Within was privacy and shelter. A small sounder of pig, wandering disconsolate in search of quarters, walked in. The gaoler, who was of a sporting tendency, closed the gates and sent word to his patron, the civil surgeon, M. The latter had a short interview with the prisoners and retired quite convinced that alone he could not do it. The sounder consisted of a heavy boar, a sow and a squeaker. M. now summoned X., and together they concocted a plan by which the boar should be netted, conveyed to some high ground and there released and ridden. Professional pig-netters were summoned and they undertook the job. Within the gaol a strong net was stretched, so as to fall easily across the line proposed for the boar's advance. To ensure him taking this line stout barricades were erected. These were constructed of trestles, planks and sheets of corrugated iron, and behind each barricade a garrison of gaolers, armed with long bamboo staves, was placed. The sounder was then roused out of an outhouse in which it was lying up. The sow went straight at the net, which fell on and enmeshed her. The squeaker passed over the fallen net, and, making straight at M. and X., had to be received on the point of a spear, and so finished. The boar took one of the barricades. We had fancied it rather a stout structure, quite inexpugnable. We erred. The old gentle-

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man went through it literally as if it had been paper. There was one crash, and the whole thing was sent flying, including the garrison. No one was hurt. The boar made no pause, but went whizzing round the inside of the gaol wall. Continuing his circuit, he arrived once more at his outhouse, and again lay up. Nothing would induce him to come out again.

The sow was wrapped in her net and removed, and M. and X. would gladly have opened the gaol gates, gone home themselves, and left the boar to go home too. But considering that such procedure on their part would be a blow at British prestige, they most unwillingly made up their minds to have another personal interview with the boar. While therefore the spectators joyously removed themselves to the tops of walls to see the fun, the two sportsmen went sorrowfully to their task of providing it.

The boar's boudoir consisted of a single dark room, possessing one doorway and one window. M. and X. approached this, spears in rest, and came to a halt on the doorstep. Their two bodies rather more than filled the doorway. In the gloom within, and some three yards from them, stood the boar, champing four very useful-looking tushes with an ominous clash. He stood facing them, head down, and looked as if meditating on a good many things, but chiefly on mischief.

They stood thus, the three of them, for rather a trying minute. Then a spectator roused the boar from his reverie by bunging in a clod of mud through the window. This touched him off, and he launched himself at the two men in the doorway.

M.'s spear-point glanced along his side and did no harm. X.'s took the boar full in the chest ; and up the full length of the shaft the boar drove till X.'s left hand

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and the leaded spear-butt struck his shaggy breast. With a bump that shook the breath out of X.'s body the boar flung him against a wall that stood close behind. The boar then left him and staggered off with the spear right through his longer axis to have a go at M., who finished him off without much ado. X. was none the worse for the bump or for two clean razor-like cuts, one on the left thigh and one on the little finger of the forward spear hand. A boar's tushes do not always deal so mercifully.

A boar carries two pairs of tushes, one pair sharp-pointed and sharp-edged and triangular in section in the lower jaw, and one pair of short thick ones in the upper jaw. When he has his mouth closed the sharp lower tushes are in a way sheathed and protected by the blunt upper tushes, against which they fit. When he wishes to use his tushes he does so with the lower pair, and must open his mouth first. With an upward jerk of his great head, he drives in the point of a tush, and then with this and the long sharp edge which follows it, he can inflict a terrible gash. It is incorrect to speak of a boar's tusks. Tusks are the perquisites of a larger animal.

III.

Natives of India, or certain classes of them, do not chew tobacco, but they do chew something as bad or worse. It makes the mouth, teeth and lips a bright scarlet, and causes constant spitting. It is called Pan Supari (betel-nut and shell-lime). The leaf in which this stuff is wrapped is grown in trellised enclosures, several acres in extent, and completely roofed with matting. This crop grows best in dense shade, and within these extensive bowers during daylight a deep twilight reigns.

In one of these pan-gardens, as they are called, a boar

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had taken up his quarters. To have put beaters in and thrust him forth would have done more harm to the valuable crop than the boar was doing. We could only make noises at him from outside, and though we moved him about and could see him dimly now at this point, now at that, in the gloom within, we could not make him break and betake himself to the rocky hills where he belonged. To enter the enclosure on horseback was impossible, for the roof was too low, and the crop, which grew like runner-beans in long strings from ground to roof, was too dense and valuable.

X., Y. and Z., who formed one party of several present, tiring of this game of hide-and-seek, decided to quit their horses and see what could be done inside on foot.

Entering the enclosure, they moved quietly along the ends of a number of alleys, each alley formed by the crop, and each about one yard wide and sixty or seventy yards long. The light was just sufficient to see the whole length of each alley. Of these they passed and examined about a score. None of them held anything. But at the farthest extremity of the twenty-first there was something. There was just light enough to make out the familiar outline of a boar, ears pricked, snout towards them, couchant. Remained the question now as to whether he would dodge away into the maze of alleys and evade them or behave like a little man—not so very little, for he later kicked the balance at over fifteen stone —and come for them. Biassing him strongly towards the latter course was a charge of No. 8 shot recently delivered into his stern. This had failed to make him break, but must have smarted. He lay quiet, however, while the trio got into formation and began to advance. The narrowness of the alley in which he lay only permitted a front of one man. So X., closely backed by Y.,

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took the boar's alley, while Z., separated from them by a tangle of runner-beans, moved down the next. X. warned his party that if the boar came for them they must receive him on the knee, spear-butt resting on the ground against the knee.

They had not advanced ten yards when the boar was off the mark and rushing down the alley at them. He was unblown, of great weight, and obviously meant business. Forty or fifty yards was a nice distance for him to gather maximum speed and impetus.

X.'s spear-point caught him on the point of the off-shoulder, tore a long wound along his side, but failed to penetrate or to stop him. It deflected him, however, a little, and X. was similarly deflected from a kneeling position in one alley to a recumbent one in the next. Y. had failed to get on the knee. He was new to the game, and explained later that he never expected the boar to behave so. The boar caught him with his head, just above the knee, threw him over his head, and passing underneath without cutting him, disappeared and did not come back, which was as well. Z. was prevented by the screen of runner-beans from participating in this interesting affair.

Having picked up the pieces, the three left the enclosure to learn what was causing the uproar, now to be heard outside.

Here were gathered the remaining horsemen. They were busy with the boar and the boar with them. He was now all out to do what mischief he could before dying. And he succumbed as right boars do, fighting to the end and without a sound.

Y. went to hospital for a week and lived to be a wiser man

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IV.

Pass we now westward—to Iraq, where boar as large as donkeys and twice as heavy were met with and killed during the war; to the Jordan Valley, where, among legions of large scorpions and small flies, our ubiquitous friend (always to the fore among his friends the Mahomedans) was chased by our patrols. And so north and by west, to a wood sleeping in the autumn sunshine of a Sabbath afternoon, in Northern France. On this wood were converging the local attorney and two friends for a little pig-shooting. These three had not done so badly during the war. In the attorney's mud-and-wattle stable-wall was a hole kicked by a British troop-horse some three years previous. When the unit to which said troop-horse belonged was relieved, attorney priced his hole at a handsome figure and was paid without demur. During the three years that followed, many scores of reliefs had taken place, and compensation for the hole had been demanded on the same generous scale and paid for on each separate occasion. When the war ended the attorney must have sighed, and probably had that hole framed and glazed. His two friends had done equally well in similar ways. Towards the middle of 1917 they were thus able to gratify their longing for sport, and they became tenants of a shooting of which the slumberous wood above mentioned was a part.

As this brisk and thrifty trio neared their wood, they perceived certain mounted groups of Britishers waiting about outside it. But as mounted troops were billeted in the village near-by, there was nothing unusual in this. But when the trio on entering their wood found a line of troops walking in extended line silently through it and

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beating every bush in a painstaking expectant way, they were both surprised and annoyed. Attorney let fly a frightful oath, and his two friends three or four more. They called on the line to halt, but the line took no notice of them. An officer hearing the clamour rode up. He explained in fluent but execrable French that if Boches fought in woods, Britishers must be practised in wood warfare. Was it not so? The attorney asked pointedly and with venom whether these soldiers expected to find Boches under every bush and to turn them out with sticks. At that moment a rabbit broke and a stick went whizzing after it. A most untimely occurrence. He was a nasty fellow this attorney, without any bowels of entente. Though the wood-fighters were withdrawn at once, he swore he would have their blood and forward his complaint to the French Mission attached to British G.H.Q., and forward it he did. But complaints filter through channels and back again through channels, and long before filtration had been achieved the regiment had left the neighbourhood, gone into action, and owing to heavy casualties, had, for the time, ceased to exist. The matter fizzled out.

V.

In good sooth the presence of pig in that country was obvious to the blindest. Woods and arable were rootled, beet-fields disgruntled, pea-stacks tunnelled. The mark of the beast lay everywhere, and loud were the complaints on all hands. Yet stern and repeated edicts against all forms of sport had gone forth again and yet again from G.H.Q. No—not even partridges might be ridden down over the stubble fields, where their numbers rendered them a nuisance, if not a positive danger, to wayfarers. Such was the situation when the miller, upon whom we

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were billeted, rushed in pale with flour and red with haste, shouting, "A boar! A boar! Quick! Quick! In my meadow! To arms!" Private Stokes immediately dropped a pile of madame's plates which he had been carrying. No one paid the smallest attention to this. Old habits were too strong. Who can sit still when there's a boar afoot in a rideable country? So instead of soothing our miller with "Oh, indeed, we hope he fares well and fancies your grass," we rushed to horse and seized lances. Into the meadow we broke, and out of it broke the boar. For a moment he was seen, and then vanished mysteriously. Two subtle fellows, A. and B., left the hubbub at once. A. rode hard a mile south to high ground. B. did the same, but went north. Both these officers, as we say when recommending one another for immediate reward, displayed initiative and tactical grasp of the situation. Both had their reward. A., on reaching his high ground, surveyed a mile-wide meadow, smooth as a lawn, on which not a fly could move without being viewed. Beyond the meadow ran a river. A. saw something which was not a fly. B., on reaching his high ground, on the other side of the river, saw nothing, but still keeping tight hold of the situation remained watching.

A. was not at first certain of what he saw. It might have been a petrified donkey of lumpish mien. It stood right in the middle of the meadow, and was perfectly motionless. So A. descended to have a nearer look at it and could scarcely believe his luck when, on nearer approach, he recognised it as the boar. There it stood, listening to the turmoil still raging about the mill and meditating a next move. He had not long to meditate, for A. was mounted on something very fast, an old pig-sticker, who bore honourable scars on a foreleg. They soon got going, and with nothing to stop them but a

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few pools of water, which might have been deep but were not, the pace was a cracker. It was like galloping over a bowling-green, the boar heading for the river, the man riding to head him off. But in accomplishing this cutting-off movement, they came within fifty yards of the bank. Then along it they raced on closing lines, boar river-wards, man and horse boar-wards. They were soon almost within sticking distance, the man was shortening his spear-arm to give him one, and the boar should either have turned in on him or jinked away from the glittering spear-point and away from the river. He did neither. He suddenly checked, and receiving only a light thrust as he did so, passed under the horse's stern. Then with six springing bounds he went headlong into the river and so across to the farther bank. To have followed him would have been no great matter, had it not been for the standing martingale which the horse wore.

Winning to the other bank, the boar hoisted himself to land, and much refreshed, cantered on to a high road. But here he was met by a staff officer who happened to be passing. He, seizing his orderly's lance, gave chase. But the boar shook off his second pursuer and passed away.

Meanwhile B. had remained at gaze. He was quite unaware of what had happened. Before him lay no lawn-like meadow, but undulating stubble land, all humps and hollows. The boar was sailing quietly over these, and was topping about the sixth hump, when his huge form came into B.'s view. Issue was immediately joined and the boar died.

A cart brought him into billets a little later, amidst popular rejoicings. He measured 35 inches, weighed 262 lb., and provided ourselves with pork-chops and the miller and all his friends with pork. In due course the

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leave-boat conveyed, and Mr R. W. of Piccadilly received, a bulky package (of a certain odour); and the head of that boar and several of his feet were preserved against the ravages of time.

It was not until we were eating pork-chops that night that the recollection of edicts and ordinances against sport came hard upon us. It was, however, unanimously agreed that had the miller rushed in on G.H.Q. instead of on us, Sir Douglas Haig and all his satellites, together with the Labour members and other politicians who took up so much of everybody's time, would have done just as we did.

But how easily one step on the road to iniquity leads to another!

VI.

The mayor said, "The old Marquis's woods are full of them. They're doing no end of harm." The curé said the same. And all the old ladies and gentlemen upon whom we were billeted threw up their hands and their eyebrows and their shoulders and uttered one word, "Épouvantable."

For calling on the old Marquis we had to be careful in selecting two who showed blood and good looks combined with linguistic ability. C., who looked all right, had to be eliminated because he always started French conversations with "Dong les bois," and never got any further. D., who could talk fluently, had to be passed over because he called everyone "My cabbage."

However, we did the best we could, and as the Marquis spoke English tolerably well, the language part did not matter. He was an old brick, thanked us for our kind offer to reduce his head of boar, and said that his *garde-chasse* should have at least one harboured for us early next morning.

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On the morrow we assembled—as it were for one of those tedious things called tactical exercises. Billets were far scattered, and we had to call the assembly by telephone. But telephones—military ones—are sad tell-tales, and we were thus compelled to use the subterfuge of a tactical exercise.

We met at 11 A.M. Several unclean beasts, harboured by the *garde-chasse*, were ousted, and the countryside was dotted with hog-hunters in full cry. The largest and heaviest boar that was turned out did not run quite so fast as the others, and elected to turn and see it out in the middle of a field of beetroot (*riche*, of course), and here he died after a lengthy mêlée which did no good to the crop. The Marquis, who unfortunately missed being in at the death, was delighted when he heard of it. He kissed his *garde-chasse* soundly on both sides and advanced on the narrator (who fortunately was well enough mounted to avoid contact), and throwing up his hat, exclaimed, "This morning I was 75. Now I am only 70!"

Unfortunately there was a French artist at this meet, and the picture which he painted of it was in circulation in quite distant parts of France a little later—most damning evidence of mutiny, which is collective disobedience of military orders. All the hog-hunters in this painting were depicted as wearing white gloves.

The owner of the damaged beetroot-field was immediately approached with bags of money. But he would none of it, affirming that the damage which the boar had caused in death was nothing to what he had done in life, and would have done again had he lived.

I do not know whether there were any comfortable reflections that night over pork-chops. We could, of course, pose as benefactors to a boar-ridden peasantry

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and a ravaged countryside. Honest cultivators with tears in their eyes said so. Besides, had we not taken five years off a sporting old gentleman's life? Was not the *garde-chasse* richer by two kisses, besides the contents of the cap? And was not the boar an 'animal nuisible,' and therefore by French law killable even in war-time?

The devil may have whispered these and other kindly assurances. Conscience spoke otherwise. What G.H.Q. would have said had a bird of the air carried the matter remains a mystery. But as it said nothing, presumably the birds were not functioning.

VII.

The sport of pig-sticking, whatever be its merits compared with other sports, stands in a category by itself. Hunter and hunted are on more level terms than is usually the case, for pig-sticking is a hand-to-hand business. The boar has a fair chance of giving something of what he gets, and is not slow to give it. The man with a rifle can knock his quarry over at what should be a safe distance. Pig-sticking is always close action.

It has been said that boar, buffalo and bee know no fear of man. To which we will add, "These three, but the greatest of these is the boar."

So now, having slain one pig in the trenches near Cambrai, a good boar in an Indian gaol, another all amongst the runner-beans, and two more in the open in France, we can wipe our spear-points and ease girths.

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V.

SHOOTING TAKIN IN EASTERN TIBET.

I MADE careful inquiries when in South-Eastern Tibet as to the possibility of shooting Takin. This little-known animal (*Budorcas taxicolor*) has seldom been shot, and I was most anxious to secure a trophy. In the village of Rima I saw a fresh skin, and was fortunate in finding the native hunter, a man named Koko, who had shot the beast. He assured me that he could take me to a place where I should find numbers of them. Eventually I arranged with him that if I saw no Takin he was to have no pay, but, on the other hand, if the expedition proved successful he was to be liberally rewarded. His agreement to these terms augured well for my success.

Our first march was down the Lohit River to Kahap, a distance of about twelve miles. At a short distance from Rima we reached a large stream, which had to be crossed on a single fixed rope carrying a small semicircular section of wood called a 'saddle': to this the traveller ties himself, and thus, hanging under the rope, he pulls himself over to the far side. To a stranger this is rather an alarming performance, especially when he reaches the middle of the stream; but the natives are quite accustomed to it, and one of my coolies came across with his pipe in his mouth. The road, although considerably used, was now very bad. In places an almost perpendicular log, in which notches for foothold had been cut, was

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placed against the rock, with a creeper hanging beside it as a hand-rail, and up these logs we had to climb.

Towards evening we reached the village of Kahap, where, finding that my shooting-ground was still two days' march distant, I at once made arrangements for the trip. In order to please the coolies who were to accompany me, I offered to buy them a pig from the villagers. The pig, however, had no intention of being caught, and several attempts to stalk him as he was grubbing about in the village having failed, he eventually disappeared into the jungle. Later on he reappeared, when the shikari, Koko, who could not wait any longer for his dinner, laid him low with a well-placed bullet.

That night I was worried by a very small species of mosquito which got through my net and no doubt spent a very pleasant night in my company. This country is infested with mosquitoes and other blood-sucking flies, from which the inhabitants with their bare legs suffer considerably: they are continually flapping at the insects with their long sleeves, much as a cow or horse does with its tail.

The next morning, having left the heavier baggage in the village, we started for the chase—the party consisting of my two Tibetan servants, Koko and five coolies. The road up the valley is seldom used, and then only by the hardy bare-footed hillmen of this part of Tibet. At first I was told that I should not be able to travel along it in boots, but to a man who has never seen one before a boot appears to be a much more clumsy contrivance than it really is. On leaving Kahap we crossed the stream up which we were to march by a wooden bridge erected near its junction with the Lohit, and then climbed a steep ascent to a plateau which was sparsely dotted with pines and was knee-deep in luscious grass. From this

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point we had a good view both up and down the Lohit, and could see the village of Sama, which the intrepid explorer who concealed his identity under the pseudonym of 'A. K.' had visited some thirty years previously. Here we halted, as I wished to test my rifle. Koko, the shikari, was the proud possessor of a Tibetan matchlock, which was considered the latest thing in arms by these primitive people, who usually hunt game with poisoned arrows. The accuracy of a modern rifle surprised them, and the coolies became quite jubilant at the prospect of meat, while I was glad to see them so confident that we should fall in with Takin. From this plateau we travelled for several miles along the steep grassy side of the valley, occasionally crossing a stream beside which a thicket of trees and shrubs was growing; sometimes we had to find our way over the face of an outcrop of rock, which necessitated the greatest care, as a slip would have meant an accident which might have had serious results in this out-of-the-way locality. At one place where we halted to rest the coolies, Koko performed some rites intended to propitiate the spirits who look after the interests of both hunters and wild animals. This performance consisted mainly in a lengthy and monotonous mumbling, and ended by striking off the head of a fowl—a sacrifice which would have shocked a Buddhist in any place where that religion was regarded as anything more than a mere name. When I was looking for Takin in Western China my shikari muttered incantations while he twisted up his garter; he then threw it down and endeavoured to find out in which direction the herd had moved by examining the folds in which it fell. As we ascended the valley the hillside became more and more covered with trees. At first these were limited to strips of jungle lining the stream beds, but farther on the forest became thicker and more

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continuous. Rain now began to fall, and it did not cease until our return to Kahap a week later. We were soon walking over slippery, moss-covered boulders, through a dense forest of dripping evergreens. Now and then the path was blocked by an enormous fallen tree, against which rough ladders of notched logs had been placed to enable the traveller to pass over it. Where these fallen trees lay in the direction of our road they formed, as we walked for a few yards along their slippery trunks, a welcome relief from continuous stumbling on the foot-path. On the road the coolies found a bees' nest, and at the cost of several stings obtained from it some watery and rather tasteless honey. At nightfall we reached a small cave under a huge boulder: this we enlarged by building a lean-to shelter of branches, and in it passed a fairly dry night.

At daybreak we started again, finding both the road and the weather worse, if possible, than before; in several places we were obliged to wade through the icy water of the river where it skirted the foot of a cliff. At one point the river flowed under a large snow bridge, and the fact that this old and dirty snow still remained at an altitude of less than 10,000 feet in the middle of summer testified to the size of the avalanche which had filled the valley with snow at this point some months earlier in the year: it had brought down large rocks and trees which were still imbedded in the lingering snow. In the afternoon the shikari and I pushed on as quickly as possible, leaving the loaded coolies to follow more slowly, and at about three o'clock we reached a clearing where some rude huts were standing. Round about were many signs of the presence of the game in pursuit of which we had come. Outside the huts, skulls bearing their curious curved horns were lying; while within them,

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skins dried as hard as boards were stretched on bamboo frames; and strips of dried meat, some of which the shikari ate, were hanging on sticks over the ashes of a fire. I was told that at this hour the Takin would still be lying in the thick forest, and that they would not move out into the open glades for two hours or more; so we sat down in the inadequate shelter of one of the huts, where with difficulty we found a dry corner through which the rain was not pouring.

After waiting thus for an hour I could restrain my impatience no longer, and, against Koko's advice, we walked up-stream to the place where the Takin were expected to be found. After going a few hundred yards, the shikari went to the riverside, where he climbed out on to a tree which overhung the water, and reported that he could see two Takin. I was all eagerness to catch my first sight of these animals, and climbed out after him. Some three hundred yards up-stream, and on the opposite bank, I saw in a boulder-strewn clearing, between the forest and the river, two queer-looking yellowish beasts about the size of small cattle browsing on the young willow-bushes. This view of them was striking enough, seen from a tree overhanging a rushing torrent with thick forest framing the single clearing, while higher up, the precipitous sides of the valley were enveloped in clouds from which rain unceasingly fell. What I had seen made me anxious to get a nearer view as soon as possible, so we climbed back on to the river bank, where, making a wide circuit and passing through a beautiful glade, knee-deep in grass, in which we saw many tracks of our game, we approached the river opposite to the spot on which we had seen the two animals. The wind, as is so often the case in these valleys where "the baffling mountain eddies chop and change," was uncertain though

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hardly perceptible. We had caught sight of the two Takin through the forest between us and the river, and I was just examining them with my field-glasses, when they winded us and threw up their heads in our direction as all game animals do. The next thing I was aware of was the rush of a brown mass to the forest. Below the two Takin which we had at first seen, a herd of at least 200 had been standing in and around a hot spring, and on becoming alarmed had made for the forest. Believing that they might not return I was half inclined to fire, being urged to do so by Koko, and in that crowd I must have hit something, but I decided that the opportunity was not a good one, as I wished to make certain of securing a good pair of horns when I did fire. Still, it was with some misgivings that I saw the thick rhododendron forest engulf the last of the herd and discerned their forms moving under the thick pine forest higher up the hillside.

In this brief glimpse of them I had been struck by their great variety in colour, which varied from the yellowish hue I had first seen to a very dark grey. Koko was of opinion that they would not return to the spring that evening, but that I might find them there next morning : however, I decided to remain watching, on the chance of their return, and we concealed ourselves behind a fallen tree. After waiting for half an hour we were able to distinguish dark forms moving in the pine forest behind the screen of rhododendrons, and presently a cow Takin came cautiously through the bushes into the open ; she stood and sniffed suspiciously, but, being reassured, moved on ; she was followed by others, each moving very slowly and suspiciously. At about forty yards from the edge of the forest was the hot spring, which emitted a strong smell of sulphur. When the leading animal had reached this, she walked into it up to her knees and

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drank the water. She was speedily followed by others, and in their eagerness to reach the hot water those following later burst from the forest and broke into a clumsy gallop, until in a short time the spring was completely surrounded by a dense mass of Takin, so that it was difficult to select a good head to shoot at. Soon three or four left the spring and came to drink at some small trickles of hot water which were nearer to the river. Among these I chose what appeared to be a good one, and fired, on which the whole herd made off into the jungle and disappeared: it was wonderful in how short a time the awkward-looking animals succeeded in reaching the cover. The one I had fired at showed no sign of being struck, and I did not think it worth while to follow him through the thick forest so late in the evening. Koko then advised me to leave the place and return to our hut, saying that the Takin would not return that evening, but that they might come again next morning. However, I waited, and in a short time the same thing happened again: first an old female appeared hesitatingly, then a few more, until finally the whole herd was standing in and about the hot water. It was too dark to risk a shot, though I remained watching them till night fell, when we returned to our hut.

We dried ourselves round the camp-fire, having made the hut more waterproof by placing some Takin skins on the roof, while Koko related adventures to me, and showed me the scars caused by a leopard which had mauled him. He was a professional hunter, and sold the skins and meat of the animals he shot, but his chief source of income was musk from the musk-deer. He had hunted them up to the borders of the wild Po country, the people of which, he told me, were accustomed to greet any stranger they met by rushing at him with a

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drawn sword before even attempting to ascertain his business.

The next morning we were up before daylight, and in pouring rain went towards the hot spring. In the dim light we could see several Takin browsing on the willow-trees by the water, but it was too dark to distinguish them clearly, and we thought it best to get opposite to the spring where we expected to find the majority of the herd. Having reached this place, we waited until it was light enough to see distinctly. As the light became clearer, I discovered some more Takin on the edge of the river, about a hundred yards farther up-stream; and as they seemed to be larger than those we had seen before, we cautiously left our hiding-place, and entering the thick forest moved up-stream until we arrived opposite to them, when we crawled towards the river again. Having decided that they were big enough to shoot, I fired at one, and heard the bullet strike him. Instead of making off into the forest with the rest, he plunged into the river that flowed between us, and stood still in the rushing water, at a distance of about thirty yards from us, when another shot laid him low, and he was carried down by the strong current until he was brought up against a stony island. I had been told by Koko that the animals would not be seriously alarmed unless we walked about near the spring on the opposite bank; if we did so they would smell our tracks and not return for several days, but if fired at from our bank they would not understand the cause of alarm, and would probably return in a short time. He therefore advised that if I shot one I should let it lie until I was ready to return to Kahap. Fortunately the body of the one I had killed was resting in shallow water close to the island and could be secured without risk of frightening the herd away. But we had some difficulty

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in recovering it, being obliged to cross the foaming river by a slippery tree that happened to be lying across it. We then dragged the heavy body from the water on to the island, and, as Koko did not expect the herd to return, we commenced skinning it. During this operation the coolies ate some of the raw liver.

While we were thus engaged, and my rifle was lying some ten yards from me, I suddenly noticed a Takin walking nonchalantly towards us. I hurriedly crawled towards the rifle, but just as I reached it the Takin, then distant about thirty yards, noticed us for the first time, swung quickly round and galloped off. As he went I fired, and saw him stagger to the shot, but he disappeared over a low mound before I could shoot again. I hoped that I might get another shot as he came in sight after leaving his shelter, but as he did not appear we forded the part of the river between the island and the farther shore and climbed to the top of the mound. At first we were puzzled at not seeing him, as it did not seem possible that such a large creature could remain hidden among the boulders, but after looking about a little we discovered him lying in a small dark cave under a rock. Koko became very excited, and begged me to shoot at once, as Takin were dangerous when wounded; so I fired and killed him. With great difficulty we dragged him down to the river and across the water on to the island, and then continued skinning the two animals. The immature horns of this one were not so long as those of the first I had killed, but I was glad to have them, as they showed a different stage in the development of the horns, about the growth of which very little is known. While we were thus engaged, the herd returned twice to the spring, but seeing us, moved off at once. I had some misgivings that our having walked up to this animal would have left a

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scent on the ground which might alarm the herd on its return ; but as he had been wounded by my first shot, we had been bound to go and look for him. In the event, Koko's advice proved to be to some extent sound, as during the afternoon some animals came to the place where we had walked, and when they smelt our tracks, wheeled sharply round and made for the forest ; but as this was at some distance from the spring, the greater part of the herd had not been disturbed. The two beasts which I had shot were very yellow, and my shikari told me, wrongly as I afterwards found out, that this is the colour of the large males.

The afternoon again found us at the same spot, and the large herd was as usual in and around the hot water. I had been disappointed with the horns of the two I had obtained in the morning, and was determined to secure one of the very large and bulky animals which I rightly guessed to be the old bulls, though their horns did not appear to be so good as those of some of their smaller companions. The colour of these larger animals was not so yellow as that of the younger males, nor was it so dark as that of the females or the immature young ones. There were two noticeably large bulls in the middle of the spring, but I found it very difficult to get a clear shot, as the herd was so closely huddled together that I never got a good view of either of them for sufficient time to allow of a steady aim. While I was lying thus concealed, something alarmed them, and they turned off towards the forest, all together as though they were being drilled ; but they all stopped just before reaching the trees, apparently waiting for further orders. One of the large ones stood end on to me, and quite clear of the others, the steep slope of the ground giving me the length of his back and neck at which to aim. I took a steady shot, and

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he dropped like a log, while the rest of the herd disappeared into the forest, and I afterwards found that the bullet had broken his spine just behind the head. I was, of course, anxious to cross the river to examine my trophy at once, but thought it wiser to leave him, as I had already seen how keen their sense of smell was.

I had shot one large and two smaller males; one of the latter had good horns, while the other was interesting as having the horns long but without the curve at the base which is developed later. I was now anxious to obtain a specimen of a female; we therefore remained where we were, and after some time the herd returned. They did not take any notice of their dead comrade, and were soon standing in the spring as before. I remained a long time watching them with my glasses. Then a female left the spring and came down to the fresh water of the river; she was distant only about thirty yards and gave an easy shot. At the sound of the rifle the herd retired into the forest, but I was surprised to see that, owing to the noise of the rushing water, some of the animals which were a couple of hundred yards up-stream, in the bed of the river, had not heard my shot. I then moved through the forest and came out on to the river bank opposite to them, but did not fire, as the horns did not appear to be better than those I had already obtained. I remained in the rain watching these animals till dark, when I returned home, leaving the two beasts I had just killed lying on the opposite bank. On our return to camp, all hands were turned on to clean the skins of the two animals which had been brought in during the morning. Our dinner consisted of steaks and marrow bones of Takin, which proved very good—as did the wild strawberries, of which we had picked a quantity. We had made parts of our hut watertight by spreading

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on the outside of it the skins which we had found lying at the camp on our arrival, and we spent a fairly dry and cheery evening in spite of the incessant rain.

The next morning we were, as usual, up before daylight, and moved towards the spring, where I spent a very long time in watching the herd. I did not wish to fire unless I could get one of the very large animals, and this was difficult owing to the manner in which the herd huddled together. It was, however, a fascinating pastime to observe the creatures from so short a distance with a good telescope. They were hustling one another about in the water, as many as could find room standing in it, and occasionally drinking a little, while those on the outskirts of the crowd were trying to push their way forward. Frequently they would butt at each other, and I saw one precocious calf tossed above the backs of the herd by an old bull. Around the spring others were walking about. All vegetation had long ago been eaten from the clearing. I was now able to examine the colour of the Takin carefully, and found, by comparing them with those I had shot, that the young ones, when quite small, are of a very dark grey ; the females are also grey but not of so dark a shade ; the adult males turn yellow ; while the very old bulls again become darker. The legs of all are darker in colour than the body, while the top of the withers is much lighter. A few of the animals were browsing on trees at the edge of the clearing, but I think that they must generally feed at night, as I twice found them browsing in the forest before daylight. After we had watched them for some time, a very large one left the spring and gave me a clear shot as he stood broadside on at the edge of the forest. On my firing he swung round very suddenly, as though knocked round by the shock of the bullet, and disappeared into the cover.

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From his action I felt sure that he had been mortally wounded, and, indeed, the next day we picked him up within ten yards of the place where he had been struck. As the animals never ventured many yards from the forest, it was important to shoot them dead, as there would be small chance of a second shot at a wounded one. At mid-day I returned to camp, and again spent the evening in watching the herd, but without firing a shot. This afternoon our camp was visited by a dog, which surprised us, as the nearest village was Kahap, two days' march distant. Koko said that some other hunters must have come into the valley in pursuit of the Takin, and the next morning we saw the smoke of their fire up a side valley. I therefore determined to bring in the animals which were lying dead on the opposite side of the river and return to Kahap

Starting at daylight, we went towards our usual watching-place. On the way I came on a single Takin feeding on the forest bushes on the other side of the river. In the dim light he looked very big, so I decided to wait opposite to him until it should be sufficiently light to see clearly. As the light increased, he favoured me by moving out into thinner forest, until he emerged on to a grassy spot which jutted out into the river. I fired, and he fell, and I was considering how I could cross the river, when he rose and disappeared into the thick curtain of willows, giving me only time to send a hurriedly aimed shot after him. It was impossible to cross the river at the point where we were, as it was both too deep and too swift, while the only crossing-place was a quarter of a mile down-stream. We hurried there, and crossed the deeper part by a fallen tree, off which, to the amusement of the shikari and owing to my clumsy boots, I fell. We then forded through the shallows and hastened up the left

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bank of the stream. On the way we passed a female with a young one, which seemed to take very little notice of us. Having reached the place where I had dropped my beast, I could find no trace of blood, neither could any tracks be found in the jungle which he had entered. We now remained on the bank of the stream on which the hot spring was situated, and moved up to where the dead beasts were lying beside it. As we approached we saw a few Takin in the hot water, but the bulk of the herd was not there. While we were watching them from a distance of two hundred yards, we saw three or four much nearer and walking towards us. We remained perfectly still, being partially concealed by bushes, and they walked right up to us quite unsuspiciously. I saw by their colour and the small size of their horns that they were all females. When the nearest had approached to within a distance of eight or ten feet of us she suddenly noticed us, and giving a curious grunt, a snort of alarm, made off. I had already shot five of the animals, but, considering how rare the Takin is, I thought I might shoot one of these —the last chance I should get—and I fired, killing the largest. We then moved to the spring, and found one of our large males lying by the water, another just inside the forest, and the female by the river where I had shot her. The ground around the spring, which I now was on for the first time, was trampled down by the nightly visits of the herd and resembled a farm-yard. In several places around the spring rough conical shelters had been made which would just conceal one man: the native hunters crouch in these and shoot the Takin with poisoned arrows at very short range. I was told that a well-placed arrow will kill one of them before it can travel twenty yards. The people cut away a little of the meat around the arrow wound, where the poison is in

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greater quantity, but the rest of the meat is considered good.

The largest of the beasts which I had shot measured 53½ inches in height at the shoulder, and was 78 inches long, including the short tail. The best pair of horns measured 20¼ inches, but these did not belong to the oldest and largest animal, whose horns were very much worn down. The shape of the Takin is peculiar, the back sloping down at a steep angle from the high withers to the tail; the neck is thick and strong; the nose is of a pronounced Roman type, rather like that of an Indian goat, which gives the profile a curious appearance; the legs are short and stout, with very large hoofs. After taking careful measurements of the dead beasts, I left the coolies, whom I had brought from the camp for the purpose, to skin the carcases, while I with the shikari moved on up-stream. We walked for about a mile over very rough ground, mostly through dense dripping rhododendron forest, where regular paths were worn by the passing of the herd; but we saw no more of them, except one or two which were moving about on the cliffs a thousand feet above us. Koko told me that on the last occasion on which he visited this place, about three weeks previously, he had seen two bears; he also told me that the beautiful tragopan and another species of pheasant were to be found here, but I saw no signs of them or of other game. We then returned to the spring and completed the skinning operations, after which we washed in the spring, the water of which was quite warm and smelt strongly of sulphur. Much to the surprise of one of the men, the action of the sulphurous water turned a silver ring he was wearing to a golden colour, but I assured him that it would soon turn to silver again. I was not able to take the carcases back to Kahap for the villagers,

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as the coolies were all fully loaded with horns and skins, so they threw them into the river and covered them with stones, saying that the meat would keep good in this way until they could return from Kahap to bring it in. The whole afternoon was spent in cleaning the skins, a task rendered difficult by the pouring rain, which made the air so damp that they could not dry.

Next morning I was up early to see whether the Takin had come back, though Koko assured me that my doing so was useless, as we had walked all round the spring, and that this would prevent them from returning for some days. The shikari proved to be right, and I saw no more of them.

We then commenced our return journey by the same difficult path, and again in pouring rain. As I was soaked to the skin, I pushed on ahead of the coolies with one servant, hoping to get a large fire lit in the cave to dry ourselves and warm the coolies on their arrival. We had no matches, and spent a chilly hour in the cave trying to light the fire with a flint and steel and a piece of damp tinder ; but, being unsuccessful, we were obliged to await the arrival of the coolies, whose experience led them to take more care to keep their tinder dry. Even after the tinder was glowing it appeared impossible to raise a fire from it, as the constant rain had made every stick of wood dripping wet. But the coolies found a piece of bamboo which they pared down with a knife until they obtained dry shavings, and from these a flame was soon obtained. We camped that night at the cave, and next day reached Kahap. Here at last the spell of rain broke and we had a hot sunny day. I took this opportunity to do my best for the skins, and rested a day while everyone in the village was occupied in cleaning them ; but the weather

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had been too much for them: all went bad in the next few days, and I was obliged to throw them away.

Takin are found in several parts of China, and I had spent a fruitless week in pursuit of them near Tachienlu, though, to judge by the tracks which I saw, they must be very plentiful there at certain times of the year. They are also found in Bhutan, farther to the west. The word 'Takin' is the name given to them by the tribes of Mishmis who dwell on the Assam border, and through whom they first became known to Europeans.

I was sorry to see the last of Koko, who was a good and willing shikari, and had enabled me to secure these much-desired horns: he accompanied me for two days up to the Mishmi frontier, whence I passed into Assam, well content with having obtained the first trophies of Takin brought from this region.

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VI.

A NEW METHOD WITH THE DRY FLY.

AMONG the things most apt to be forgotten by the angler with the dry fly is the fact that the reason of reasons why the trout will frequently decline to accept the feathered lure which is offered him by way of a satisfactory simulacrum of the natural insect is the unfortunate circumstance of the gut cast attached to it. Of course, this is a proposition which is perfectly self-evident directly it is stated: it is a truism of which every fisher has always been fully aware in theory, but which not one single angler, even among the most highly proficient in his craft, out of ten thousand, appears to have appreciated so thoroughly as to set himself deliberately to meet it with any practical solution of the difficulty which it suggests. I have been privileged to study with close attention the performance of many of the most proficient in this fine mystery; I have discussed the methods, with competent critics, of those whom I have not had the fortune to see; I have read with diligence I believe all the many books on the great subject which ancient and modern wisdom has given for our instruction, yet in not a single one of these works of erudition, and in the method of presenting the fly to the fish of only one of those past-masters, have I been able to find so much as an attempt at a practical solution of this the most important of all the many problems of the angling art—the presentation

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of the fly to the fish in such a way that the fly only, or the fly first and the gut merely as a subsequent apparition, shall be proffered to the trout's notice.

Of course, it is a problem which we all endeavour to solve, in our practice, when it is a question of fishing at all across the stream. If the angler and trout are in this relative position, the former will always make it his effort to cast in such a way that the fly at the end of the cast shall pitch on the water a foot or two above the nose of the fish, in order that it may float down over him, and that all the gut cast and the rest of the attachments shall be on the hither side, so to say, of the fish—between the fish and the angler. In this case it is to be hoped that the trout will apply his attention to the fly and will take no notice of the gut which, lying across the stream, does not so float as to come over his head. But all, I think, of the great masters of the art will tell you that this throwing across to a trout is not suggestive of the ideally best position for the angler. Directly behind the fish, that is to say, directly down-stream from him, is the vantage-point that they would wish to occupy from which to issue their invitations to him. As Mr Halford writes, if an angler can find a fish steadily rising under his own bank, that fish is in the most ideal position for capture. If the stream is so shallow and the bed so firm that you can wade in, it may be possible to get thus directly behind a fish feeding out in the middle of the river also, and by so doing you usually gain the vast advantage of obviating the very probable necessity of throwing across a current moving at a different pace from that of the piece of water in which the fish is lying, and thus eliminate most of the chances of that drag of the fly, causing a little wake in the water to follow it, which makes trout rising in certain places almost impossible to delude.

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And now it appears to me that having reached this point and having introduced the great name of Mr Halford,[1] I owe a profound apology to the reader for the presumption and the greatness of the claim that I am here making. For the claim, evidently, is no less than this, that I have something to say which is new in regard to this oft-discussed matter of the best way possible of the presentation of the fly to the fish—something that has not yet been said in the many books of Mr Halford and of all the other pundits. It is to be confessed that the claim is no less an one than this. My hope, however, is to make justification of the claim, rather than apology for it—for, after all, it is not to be supposed that either Mr Halford or any other of the writers who have done so very much in the way of teaching us how to angle scientifically for that most sophisticated of fish in all the world, the trout of the chalk streams, would imagine that, even so, they had said the last word on their science. Such a presumption as that would be a limitation of the variety and interest of the very science itself, which we all confess to be infinite in its variety. All have contributed their quota, and doubtless their craft will continue to develop, while trout grow more shy and men grow more practised, as long as fish swim in the rivers and men walk on the land. But now, in order that I may not appear too certainly to be ranging myself among those persons who rush in on ground too sacred even for the celestials, let me say hastily that I should not have ventured to write one word of this had I not received inspiration from what I have seen of the work of one angler, whom I believe to be pre-eminent over all the

[1] It is only since the writing of this essay that the lamented death has happened of this past-master of the angling art.—H. G. H.

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many others who are now engaged, at the season of the year, in that most delicate business of beguiling to the hook the trout of the chalk streams. I do not care, without particular permission, to give his name to the public, but there are many who pursue this art on the rivers of the South who will put a name to him at once, without a moment's hesitation, by virtue of the indication above given. In the opinion of all those who know his skill as an angler, and with whom I have ever discussed the question, he is not only better than any other man at the art, but is even in a class entirely by himself. As I put it to a friend who told me he had lately been watching, on the Itchen, the angling of one reputed great master whom I did not happen to have seen at work—" I suppose G——," naming him whom I piously believe to be the greatest of all, " could give him a stroke a hole, could he not ? " " Two strokes a hole, I should think, from what I have seen of the two," was the reply, delivered with a fervour that bespoke full conviction. It is, therefore, on no unsupported personal opinion that I claim so much for this most remarkable fisher, and the records of a certain book belonging to a certain fishing club, records extending over many years, prove the claim to demonstration that we have, in this angler, one who, in the words of a gillie regarding him, " catches fish when no one else can catch them," and who catches more fish than anyone else when others are catching them too. Set this man down, with any other you may name, on a river equally well known to the two of them, and at the end of a week's fishing, presuming that to be a sufficient period to eliminate the luck of finding fish rising on one beat and not on another, it is my conviction that he would be certain to have killed twenty-five per cent more weight of fish, using virtually the same flies, than the other, and I should be

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surprised if his advantage were not nearer fifty than twenty-five per cent. It is impossible to suppose that one man would achieve so much greater things than all others simply by a superior delicacy and accuracy in the placing of the fly. It suggests very forcibly that he has some method, some secret, which he has made, and in some measure has kept, his own ; and it is, as I hope, by the revelation of that method, or of so much of it as I believe I understand, that I shall justify the large claim lately made. Mention of 'keeping a secret' might be thought to imply an idea, not quite sportsmanlike, of a selfish hugging of an advantage over others. Any such ursine behaviour is as far remote as could be from the disposition of this best of anglers, which is of a modesty that makes him most reluctant to speak of his own doings and methods. He is not of our noble army of scribblers, and it is with difficulty that he can be induced to admit that his skill is at all superior to that of any other. "I happened to be lucky in finding the fish rising," is his usual apology for a day's bag a cent per cent heavier than that of the next man. It is only with the greatest difficulty that he can be induced to admit any superiority in his skill or any difference in his method. But his method is different, and I will endeavour to make explanation of it.

It may be as well to say, thus early, that if a student of the gentle art of fishing with the dry fly is to take any practical advantage of the inferences to be drawn from the practice of this great master, we must presume him to have passed the first standards, as we may call them, those very early stages of his education in which his attention is concentrated on the work of getting the fly out by any means he can. We must suppose him to have passed that point at which it ceases to be necessary for him to work laboriously at his overhand casting, and

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to have acquired the necessary art of horizontal casting, either forward as well as back-handed with the right hand, or forward with both hands ambidextrously. And I may say this for the comfort of those who, like myself, are utterly incapable of executing anything like a useful cast with the left hand, that this best of all fishers is equally useless with his left hand, and does all the work which ambidexterity would perform with the left hand by means of the back-hand cast with the right. Nor can I see that anything of value is lost by it. Now and again it may happen that a trout is lying in a place where a long reach out with the left hand, while the right hand has grip of a supporting tree on the bank, may get a rise for an ambidextrous fisher where a back-handed throw with the right could not reach to the fish; but these places are rare, and as a rule, that has few exceptions, the back-hand cast with the right, if well done, can pitch the fly where it needs to go in order to reach the most elusive fish. That the fly, however thrown, will float over the fish just like the natural insect, does not by any means follow, no matter by which of the two modes it is cast there.

The secret, then, in brief, which this wonderful angler possesses—to the exclusion of all the rest, to the best of my knowledge, of the angling world—is that of presenting the fly to the fish with such a curl at the end of the gut that the fly only, and the gut not at all, comes floating down over the fish's head. Standing or crouching directly behind the fish, whether wading in the stream or kneeling on the bank, he is able to do this, and is able to do it either forehanded or back. That means to say, that if he is fishing on the proper right [1] bank of a stream,

[1] By 'proper right,' I mean on the right hand of a man facing down-stream.—H. G. H.

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so that he will naturally cast fore-handed with his right hand to a rising fish, he will be kneeling on the bank, or perhaps have the left knee on the bank and the right foot down in the water, and will essay to beguile this fish to its death in the following way. With rod held low over the water, he will execute the horizontal cast, fore-handed, making the line travel, in the forward part of the cast, very nearly in the true horizontal plane, parallel with the surface of the water. Then, just before the line and cast have gone out straight, while there is yet a considerable curve, convex towards the bank, in the line, he will arrest the movement and hold the rod rigid. That means that the following movement is imparted to the final end of the cast and the fly that terminates it :—it is arrested, with a sudden stop, almost a jerk, as it is coming round to straighten itself out, and the effect of that is to give it a little sharp flick round towards the left. That is really the final moment of the cast : the cast is completed ; but of course there is a moment yet before it all—fly, gut and line—comes on the water, the moment, namely, that it takes the force of gravity to bring down the line and the rest of the arrangements to fall lightly on the stream. And you see what the result of it is, so far as the fish is concerned, if the final curve of the gut towards the left has been nicely calculated and the whole throw has been correctly performed—that the fly lands a foot or a foot and a half, whatever distance, in the pace of the stream, may seem to be best, above the trout's head, but that no part of the gut is directly in front of its nose. All the gut will lie on the right of the trout, and will come floating down to its side. The fly alone will pass over its head.

Does this sound something of a *tour de force* or conjuring trick ? To those to whom it comes as a new project

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it is possible that it may so sound, but as a matter of fact it is not altogether so difficult of achievement as may be thought. Far indeed be it from me to pose as having at all conquered its difficulties. Now and again, after much practice, I am able to achieve the throw correctly, to put the fly, and the fly only, to sail over the fish's head ; and when this happy event does come off, it is wonderful how seldom a seriously feeding fish seems able to decline the invitation, of course on the assumption that the stream is flowing so as not to put any drag on the fly. But when you can get right behind your fish it is not often that this fatal drag occurs. The real expert should be able to accomplish this little curve of the gut at the end—it is something in the form of a note of interrogation that the cast should fall—equally with the back-handed as with the fore-handed throw, for then he can terminate his invitation to the fish with the correct note of interrogation (only turned the other way round), equally deftly whether it lie under the one bank or the other of the stream. Or it may be, if he is an ambidextrous artist, that he will, on occasion, shift the rod to his left hand and cast the curving tail of gut in that way.

Anything like a moderate breeze of wind seems to make this cast, as is only likely, far more difficult to execute. If the wind be across stream, it either flicks the curve back or brings too much of the gut round, according to the direction of the wind in relation to the direction of the curve. If the wind be straight, and at all strong, behind, it is difficult to avoid its straightening out the curve, and if the wind be down-stream it is hard to get the cast to pitch on the water lightly and yet not to have its end blown back on itself.

As for the mode of execution of the throw, I have endeavoured to give an idea of it above. By way of

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amplifying that suggestion, be it said in the first place that possibly enough there are as many ways of achieving it as there are 'of making tribal lays,' and very likely 'every single one of them is right'; but the way which seems effective, so far as my humble efforts at the stroke go to teach me, is to make the line travel fairly quickly before the moment of arrest. Of course the pace and the power of any throw are determined not by the amount of force that your muscles put into it, but only by the amount of that force which they communicate to the steely-springing rod. It is the flick of the rod that communicates the movement to the line, and that flick does not give its full effect unless it is imparted at the moment when the line is at the right degree of extension backward. All this is of the grammar of the art of casting, and it is supposed that the student of this, the 'interrogation note' cast, will have passed the standards of the first grammar.

It is necessary that there should be a certain pace of travel given to the line by the flick, in order that all its force shall not be spent by the moment of arrest, but that there shall be still sufficient to carry the end of the cast, with the fly, round in its curve. Nor does it in the least follow that the fly and the gut shall not fall with perfect lightness on the water, because they have been travelling at a tolerable speed shortly before alighting. They do not alight with anything like the force of their travel: it is a force which does not, in fact, affect the mode of their alighting, because that force is checked, it is pulled up short, and the fly and the gut come on the water with only the gentle force of the gravity that causes them to fall from the height of a foot or so above the water's surface. For this reason it is a very useful cast to use in a wind of which the strength is not too excessive. The

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line can be sent out at a pace which defeats the action of a moderate current of air, and yet the gut will fall lightly on the water. The problem is to induce it to alight before the wind has caught it and sent it erratically.

It hardly needs to be emphasised how much greater is the chance of deceiving a fish by means of a lure thus presented than of the most lightly thrown fly offered in the usual way, for this usual mode implies that a portion of gut shall of necessity pass over the fish's head before the fly comes within its range, and though the wonder is rather that the trout endure the sight of the gut at all than that they are sometimes scared by it, it is quite certain that many a fish which does not at once dart off when it sees the gut may still be made watchful and suspicious. He may even continue to rise, though in a less confident way than before, at the natural fly, and be making so careful an inspection of each insect as it comes to him, before accepting it, that there is very little chance of his making any mistake when the imitation comes to his notice. There is very much less probability of throwing him into this state of morbid watchfulness if the fly be presented to him with such a curve at the end of the cast that the fly only and none of the gut comes over his head.

There is a further point that is worth mentioning in commending this throw to the dry-fly fisher. He will know, of his past experience, that if a fish comes away from his position to the distance of six inches or a foot—he is not likely to move farther, unless it be to drop down-stream as the fly comes over him, examining it, in which case he is always a difficult fish to strike if he does finally elect to sample the fly—if the fish moves right or left to seize an artificial fly it means that he has fully made up his mind to have it, and is far more likely to take a good

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hold of the fly and to let the hook take a good hold of him, than the fish which merely sucks it in as it passes straight above his head. It is, in fact, almost to be taken as a maxim that the further you can induce the fish to come to your fly the more likely you are to hook him. And that being so, it is evident that you have not done yourself much harm in relation to the fish—have not, to any appreciable extent, spoilt your chance of catching him—if you happen, throwing thus with the cast curving towards the left, to pitch the fly a little outside him, a little to his right. If it sails down say six inches to the right of him, and he does not come for it, no damage has been done. The gut and all the rest of the line of invitation is lying yet farther away to his right, and he is little likely to take notice of it; and if, on the other hand, he does observe your fly and think it worth his while to travel this half foot or so to taste it, there is all the greater probability of your tasting him, a little later in the day, at table than there would have been if your fly had been cast so as to pass exactly over him. There is thus this added point to be scored in this cast's favour, that if not exactly achieved at the first or second time of asking, the trout is far more likely to accept a third or subsequent invitation than if each proffer has been accompanied with some of the gut passed over him for inspection.

The essential for the correct performance of this cast, which is really not so subtle an affair as it is bound to appear in the description, is, as I suppose in every other, that the timing shall be accurate. The line must be sent forward with just force enough, and no more, nicely proportioned to the length of line that is being used, to take it out quickly, yet not too quickly, to the required distance. If the pace be not enough, or again if it be too much, then, when the check is put on, the end of the cast

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fails to come curving round to make its note of interrogation. On the other hand, if the force is calculated nicely it is most satisfactory to see the right termination placed to the all-important question which you are asking the fish—that invitation to dinner which has to be put so exactly in the form in which he likes it if it is to win his acceptance. And the fly is not in any real sense thrown on the water. It is thrown out, thrown with a considerable speed and power ; but then it is to be arrested. It is to be arrested just high enough above the water's surface to allow the fly and the end of the cast to have time to make the curve, and then to fall, without any force imparted from the thrower's arm at all, just as lightly as if they had been carefully laid there by his hand.

You may believe one who has, with infinite pains and with very moderate success, endeavoured to acquire the art of this most subtle and delicate throw, that it is an endeavour which adds immensely to the interest of dry-fly fishing, and that even its very imperfect acquirement adds more than a few to the fish that you may expect to catch with the dry fly.

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VII.

BARE FORESTS.

"In April come he will.
In May he blows all day."

I.

THE old couplet adapted as above applies very well to the hot wind which in India has its chief season in the fourth and fifth months of the year. A wind that is a terror and a torment to some, yet it is not so bad but that it blows good to somebody. To myself and others it blows leave, sixty days of it or often more, when you are free to go whither you will—uphill after mountain game, or away over the great plains after a tolerably wide choice of the greater beasts of the forests thereof. And should you choose the latter, you will find that the hot wind has swept and garnished the forests for you, licked up the undergrowth, seared off the last leaves, reduced the number of drinking places, and increased the drinkers at such water as remains.

Were I starting life over again, I think I should give the mountains a turn, eschew all scorching places and sleepless nights, and get me to chilly regions where snow is, and cool shady precipices, and the scent of pine and birch, or the sight of their green tops far below me. I should warm my toes by camp-fires o' nights, and retire under blankets and not mosquito-curtains, and dream of

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Ibex and Markhor. On the other hand, I might take the bad old road, and start once again as I started years ago, full of youth and inexperience, after bison and tiger. On that occasion, having done everything foolish that only extreme youth could do, does still do, and will ever do, I returned with neither bison nor tiger, but with a good deal of well-deserved fever and a burning desire to go again. From that day onwards I continued at my old haunts with more success and less fever.

II.

Not by any means the most commonly shot animal of Indian big game is the buffalo—*ce méchant, quand l'on attaque, il se défend,* which is French for vindictiveness. In other words, the buffalo is reputed a 'nasty' animal. When the hot wind started blowing not long ago, or rather before its advent, I was casting about for the most likely spot to go to for buffalo.

Much hampered by the curse of all-pervading railways which nowadays will carry Dick, Tom, or Harry without much trouble to the remotest places, I was sore put to it to find virgin soil—that is to say, soil with heaps of buffaloes, and no sandwich papers, orange-peel, or egg-shells. I was determined to find virgin soil, or failing that, virginal.

I opened an atlas, and found a largish bit of India marred with few or no railways. Buffalo dwelt here, I heard, and the inhabitants insisted on beads for payment, and would not look at coin of the realm. This seemed about the line of goods I was after. It was a Native State, containing a potentate and a political officer. I addressed a letter to the proper person, who was, of course, the political officer, and received a curt

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reply saying that my proposition to come and kill a few of the potentate's buffaloes was quite out of the question.

I then employed a third party, one who was able to use thick creamy notepaper bearing the superscription, "Viceregal Lodge." The superscription did it. He was instructed to write and ask for a permit for a friend. It worked like a pink pill on that pale political person. He replied, to the third party, with tremendous warmth. Relays of the potentate's motors were offered to convey third party's esteemed friend into the cream of the shooting country. A camp would be found ready pitched here, another there, and so on.

I pinned together the political's two letters, the warm one to Viceregal Lodge and the cold one to myself, wrote a covering line explaining that I was very grateful but had changed my mind, and forwarded the docket to him. I bore him no malice. We are all human. But I felt that I should be better elsewhere, and I again sought for a sequestered spot. Eventually I found one, one hundred and twenty miles from the nearest railway, and, *faute de mieux*, decided to go there.

I summoned Genghis Khan, my servant and companion of many another expedition, and told him to have all things ready by 15th April. Not a very difficult matter, for frequent practice had made our mobilisable state very perfect. Tents wanted neither patching, poles, nor pegs, nor did rifles or other gear want looking to. Genghis, for his second name was not baptismal, and only assumed with increasing years and respectability, said he would want ten days' leave to remove his 'house' to 'her' home. We do not speak of our wives in the East. He also wanted an advance of pay, and information as to who else was going with us. He knew what the answers to all three requests would be. Who but Chujjoo, the

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jolly young water-man, Genghis's slave and my servant, should accompany us ? Chujjoo was a stout fellow, with few cares and no interests beyond those connected with his goatskin water-bags. He was jolly in a silent way, for he possessed such an impediment in his speech that he was to all intents dumb.

Genghis was of the bearded, bluff, King Henry VIII. type of Mahommedan, who could cook meals almost impossible to eat at quite impossible times and places, skin a tiger, drive a pair of bullocks, and do many other things besides. Bullock-driving was his favourite accomplishment. He, his slave and myself had fared forth on the chase many a time, and we suited one another admirably.

The heavy rifle was unboxed, and from that day till we started it stood in a corner of the room, convenient for frequent handling. It was much too heavy for me, but by frequently throwing it up before starting on a shoot, I became more or less inured to it. The shock of its discharge had often knocked off my hat if not well secured, and sometimes sent me, in a sitting posture, into it. It was a rough friend, but an honest one.

III.

One afternoon in mid-April a train carried us away. A night and the best part of another day we were in the belly thereof, and were then cast up on the platform of a little junction to await a connection.

It was while Genghis, always a man of resource, was boiling the kettle on a long iron rod over the furnace of an unprotesting locomotive, that the Casual Fellow blew in on us. A second cup was got out, and he was asked to join me at tea. We learnt that we were both

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bound for the same terminus and with the same object in view.

He was of the kind that considers the lily of the field too closely, and takes no thought for food, raiment, or anything else. Most of us have met that kind, quite undeserving, but usually rather attractive folk, drifting placidly on the current of destiny or of chance, and generally finding somebody to do for them what they should do for themselves.

B. was one of these lucky people. He had dimly formulated an intention, or, more properly speaking, a hope or wish, to come where he now was ; and here he was, someone having caught his train for him, taken his ticket and presented him with a large iced cake. The cake appeared to have been the extent of the arrangements for spending sixty days' shooting leave in some remote place. As to exactly where he was to shoot or what, or about such troublesome details as permits to shoot and so on, he was waiting for someone to see to all that.

At tea he produced his cake from a large tin helmet-case, and drawing a hunting-knife, stood poised over it as if unwilling to strike. "Not a bad inscription, I think ? " he remarked in a pondering tone. No, certainly not bad, but at the moment I did not grasp its full significance. Scrawled in thick pink letters on the white top were the words, " O God ! keep kind master." B. was a little hazy as to who had given him the cake, but rather thought it was his cook, who, he added, " had remained behind." I decided later that the cook was a pious and a discreet man, who, having recorded this prayer in pink sugar, had remained behind to watch its efficacy. In plunged the knife, and the inscription was marred. I ate some of it myself.

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Next morning we finished our railway journey and the cake, nearly; for B., fully assured by past experience of manna, quails, or other heaven-sent provender, could afford to be prodigal.

An ancient rest-house received us into its shadows. Under its low thatch it stood blinking out into the glare which encompassed it, just like some old man whose eyes hate the sunlight, and who wears a wide-brimmed sun-hat so much too large for him that he can barely see out of it at all. An ancient-of-days, deeply reverential and of the kind nowhere else to be found save in these remote old rest-houses, received us. After the hot railway it was paradise—the darkness of the rooms, the shelter from the wind now raging impotently against rattling doors, and the large zinc baths and abundance of water.

B. was not the least concerned over the fact that he had come something like four days' journey without having first obtained a shooting permit and an area of forest assigned to him to use it in. It was late in the day to get the latter. We agreed that something must be done, and that it might be done when we called on the Deputy Commissioner next morning, if we could pitch a piteous enough tale. B. suggested that, as he was a bad hand at pitching any kind of tale whatever, I was to stir the heart of the Deputy Commissioner with something really moving. As B. put it, "I feel sure that *you* could cause the bowels of a brass image to yearn over me."

When entering the realms of potentates—and Deputy Commissioners are scarcely less in their own districts—it is as well to go and pay your respects on them. I have found them very friendly and helpful, and often very lonely in months like April or May, when their consorts depart to the hills or over-seas.

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We paid our call next morning, and by the time we had adjourned with our host to the swimming-bath, B. was in possession of a permit to shoot in one of the best blocks or areas of forest in that district. He was not elated as he should have been. Complacently content would describe his attitude towards his extraordinary luck. During the interview his part had been to maintain a child-like eagerness. This he had done and nothing more. He thanked me later for my part in the matter, but added, "I think it was that dewy-eyed child-like look I put on that did it, and made him get his yearn on." B. had eyes like boiled gooseberries.

In the swimming-bath we met the station: to wit, a missionary, the police officer, the doctor, and the judge —not your wigged and scarlet-robed kind, but the plainer variety, who can pass a death sentence one hour, and can be jostling nobodies in a swimming-bath the next, and then goes on passing sentences all day, and writing judgments most of the night. Then to breakfast with the Deputy-Commissioner, and then the passing of the long day as best we might. Some of its cooler hours were spent in fitting out B. with a few things to supplement the cake at a Parsee's shop.

That night after dinner we and our carts rumbled off by different roads on the first stage towards our respective shooting grounds. I heard from my casual acquaintance once or twice. Figuratively speaking, ripe plums seemed to be dropping into his mouth and roses to strew his path. Put plainly, he was having a great deal better sport than he deserved. I have never met him since, but he paid me back a small loan I made him.

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IV.

There followed one hundred and twenty miles of straight flat road, traversed by night, with the long days spent in dark silent rest-houses, and when they petered out, beneath roadside trees. Days and nights of infinite leisure and restfulness, with long hours to read good old books that are so often jostled out by bad new ones and too little time. There are worse things than rumbling along over a fairly good road lying on one's back in a cart and staring up at the stars until one is rumbled off to sleep.

Early one morning we met the broken rifle of an angry man. It was being sent in for repair, I do not know how many marches and later how many days by train. Its bearer, a reticent Pathan soldier, under Genghis's genial influences, let out that its owner recently had at last obtained an absolute pot-shot at a tiger which had long defeated him. He had pressed the right trigger and had a miss-fire. He then pressed the left trigger, and had another. The tiger had then walked quietly away, and the sahib had taken the rifle by the barrels and smashed it against a tree. This sort of thing is better done with golf clubs and nearer shops. But let him that would throw the first stone be certain that he himself would have been sinless under like provocation.

Day or night the silent-footed jingling mail-runners passed or overtook us—always at a five-mile-an-hour jog-trot, and never at any lesser pace. Surely they are the most conscientious of all postmen, appearing like specks down the long perspective of the straight road, growing in size till the music of their jingling staves is heard, and again passing away into specks. Myself unseen, I have often watched them pass along the blazing road,

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and with heavyish bags sometimes, and they have never dropped into a walk. Probably a merciless babu-post-master with a clock and a meticulously prepared table of fines awaits the runner at the end of the seven-mile stage. Hereabouts the night runners passed us carrying torches. I asked why, and was told " Bears."

I can imagine an Englishman running seven miles on the hard highway on an Indian summer's day, and thinking it did him good ; but to see an Indian doing this is the most un-Eastern sight in all the East, and shows what the G.P.O. can do.

And so after about a week on the road, we came to a tiny civil station, which marked the end of all things save the forest, which here began in earnest. A subordinate member of the Provincial Civil Service ruled here. I looked him up, and found him to be a native from a far distant part of India and a dweller in towns. A fish out of water was scarcely more out of place or more miserable than this mild-mannered young man. I wanted all sorts of information out of him about his district ; but although the great brain that had laughed at examinations and had landed its owner here in hell, was stored with regulations and statistics, he could tell me little enough about the human side of things.

Hoping to cheer him up, I congratulated him on finding himself in such a sporting district. But to this he replied, " But, sir, I have promised mother not to shoot any dangerous games."

V.

As darkness fell that night, my equipage and I faded away into the forest dim. Not quite like Keats's Nightingale. No one sang of summer, there was no beechen green,

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and no full-throated ease of any sort whatever. Of leafless forest there was plenty, and a track consisting chiefly of boulders, and several sweating mortals and their lurching carts.

Our progress through those silent forest aisles savoured of the outrageous. For hung about on the outside of the carts was every kind of banging rattling utensil—pots, kettles and cans ; and the uproar that these set up as we jolted along was fearful. On either hand stood a wall of bare trees, and above us there was a strip of sky and some unrefreshing-looking stars. It was a horrid hot night, too hot to stumble along in the dark over the boulders, and yet scarcely better in the cart. It ended at last before dawn, when the bullocks with a last weary snuffle were taken out, the pole sank to rest, and every-one fell asleep at once and without a word.

While prowling about next morning before turning in for the day, I actually trod on the tail-end of a bear in some long grass. He rushed straight away, and I let him go as I did not wish to disturb the forest. It was lucky it was his tail that I trod on and not his snout, for the bear, with a wipe from his terrible claws when he is feeling hot and bothered, can remove the whole of the human face. No animal is so dreaded by forest folk as is the sloth-bear, and with such reason. He is not out to make trouble, but being something like a semi-blind and rather deaf person, very much overdressed for the time of year, his temper is a bit short and jumpy. With his turned-in feet, awkward gait and great bare snout, he is far from ornamental ; and when alarmed and rolling doubled-up down a hillside or scrabbling down a tree, screaming and roaring and whinnying with fear, he is often enough a figure of fun. He has a sad and bad reputation, mythical of course, for a fondness

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for village maidens and for carrying them off to his den.

Two great tamarind-trees marked the end of our journey. These stood on high ground that overlooked a mile-wide river-bed, more bed than river at this season. The farther bank was walled in by forest.

Here under the trees a sylvan bower was speedily erected, roofed and walled with green boughs, and affording fragrant and airy quarters, much preferable to a tent, which, however, remained pitched in case of storms.

The man I had come 400 miles to find appeared soon after daylight—Heera the tracker, a little, old, rather deaf product of the jungle, insignificant and humble; and yet his fame and name were greater than mine would ever be. With him came a younger man, also a tracker.

Heera said at once that no buffalo existed this side of the river—no, nor bison either. If I wanted tiger there were three about. No? Well, then, only over yonder were buffalo and bison, and he waved his arm to the forest on the farther bank. But this was not in my area, and out of bounds. It was, in fact, in the Native State (but in quite another extremity of it), which I have mentioned earlier in connection with two letters.

Heera quashed any scruples I may have had. Everyone, he said, who camped here shot there, and there was an end to the matter. To-morrow, then, two hours before light began to come, we were to make a start.

It was a sizzling night. I abandoned bed, and got me to a deck-chair and to sleep at midnight. I had not had nearly enough of this at 3.30 A.M., when I had to rouse and eat a dismal meal of one of Genghis's horrible stews. A hot tramp of an hour followed, and then after some groping about in the dark, a creek and a dug-out came

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to hand, the latter possessing a choice tap of bilge-water, but it was as cool as anything else to sit in. We pushed off on to a wide star-lit channel of the river, and I fell asleep. The stars were not yet paling when we grated quietly on a sandy beach, and so we all went to sleep on the warm sand till daylight. I was struck with the profundity of the silence that reigned, and yet dawn showed that we had not been the only living things abroad.

When sufficient light came, the trackers got to work amidst a maze of buffalo and bison tracks, for both animals watered here. After half an hour's silent work, the two men came together, held a low consultation, and then transferred most of the few garments they wore, to their heads. They then started away from the bank on the tracks of something. From the scores of tracks, old and new, of two kinds of animal of all ages and both sexes, and some of these tracks sunk a foot or more in the ooze, the sleuth-hounds had disentangled those of a solitary bull. To-day it was a buffalo, but we never knew when it would be a bison. The head of a herd is not to be worried with his nursery, and is therefore solitary, and therefore the most shootable of that herd. His tracks are therefore the ones to follow.

This was to be an easy day. Even to me the track in some places was plain to see, something like that of the largest cart-horse, with a slight indentation at the toe. In other places it was quite invisible to me, but like large print to the trackers who kept along with scarcely a check for an hour. At the end of that time, its owner suddenly shot across a glade at 150 yards' range. I loosed two barrels, but heard no thud. Reloading, I dashed after him as he disappeared into a thick plantation. Into this I rushed, and then pulled up short. A

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pair of immense black horns faced me at twenty yards' distance. They were slowly swinging from side to side, and neither advanced nor retreated. From the undergrowth, which at first hid them, the great wet muzzle, the forehead and the fore-parts of the buffalo grew into the picture. The saplings I was amongst were not of a very comforting size, and I wondered what sort of protection one of them would provide against those horns, should the buffalo decide on taking the initiative.

I worked to one side, and put what I thought a finishing bullet into the centre of the neck. There was no result. I put in two more. I might have been shooting into a stop-butt. I put two into his chest, just under the muzzle, which covered most of it and all the forehead. Still no result. I felt for more cartridges, and found that my first reserve had been expended. My second reserve was with Heera, well back, and thirty feet up a tree. I judged this by his voice, for I dared not take my eye off the buffalo. I called to him that I wanted cartridges. Heera wisely remained where he was, and to encourage me shouted, "Be very careful. This is a bad one. He has killed several." I backed under Heera's tree and, after some argument, persuaded him to descend so far as to reach my upstretched hand. With five more cartridges I resumed operations. Of these the fourth brought the poor bull to his knees, but on them he was lively enough to pivot round and continually face me. Finally, I walked up to him and put my last bullet into his forehead, and he rolled over dead. The trackers came to earth when they were reassured that all was well. Slowly they curvetted round the dead animal, intoning, "Won't we drink a bottle to-night? Won't we drink a bottle to-night?" I asked Heera whom this buffalo had killed. He replied, nobody so far as he knew. Then why did he

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tell me just now that he had killed several? To this was given no satisfactory answer. It was probably as good a way as any other to warn an ass to be careful. We were back in camp by 10 A.M., and found Genghis wondering what all the firing had meant. Well, it meant a headache to me. He had heard my rolling salvoes echoing in the hills about camp, and knew that the heavy rifle did not usually have to speak more than once, or twice. A posse later went out to carry in the head and meat. When these came in, an inquiry elicited the following facts. The first shots of all had broken a shoulder and anchored the buffalo in the copse where I had suddenly come on him after first shooting. In skinning the head and neck, the neck-skin was found to be three inches thick. It is always the toughest part of an animal's skin, for it protects several vitals, and this was a very old bull.

This had proved too much for my solid hardened bullets, which, despite the weight of powder behind them, had simply penetrated the skin partly and then mushroomed. It was the chest shots that got home. His head from tip to tip along the curves and across the forehead measured nearly nine feet—quite good, but nothing very wonderful.

Several bottles of native grog were drunk that night, at twopence a bottle!

That afternoon I mixed the bag by catching a ½-lb. mahseer.

VI.

Almost daily we sallied forth as on that first morning, drifted down the star-lit river, grated on the same sandbank, and when light came searched for fresh tracks at the same drinking-place. It was always a toss-up whether

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we hit on buffalo or bison tracks. It was seldom that we found none. Then sometimes we had luck, and sometimes (which in big-game parlance means pretty often) we had not. A shower of rain would wash out in two minutes tracks we had been on for hours. A shift of wind or the crack of a twig would send away with a snort and a crash the quarry we had been after for the best part of a long day. On one occasion two pairs of naked human foot-tracks suddenly appeared over the buffalo tracks we were following. I did not realise their full significance till Heera threw up the sponge and whispered some very bad words. Our day was spoilt. Soon afterwards the thunderous discharge of something evidently very antique and large in the rifle line proved that I was not the only poacher abroad.

There were several tigers about. On the flat sandy river-bed their tracks would run out for hundreds of yards in a perfectly straight line from the forest. A thirsty tiger makes a bee-line for his water, and, after drinking, gets back to covert again by the shortest possible route. That was all as plainly written in the smooth sand as large print. What sights one would see if one had eyes that could see in the dark! I had with me a little herd of six buffaloes intended for tiger, but beaters were not to be had, and sitting up over a tied-up buffalo is not a form of sport I have any relish for. So my herd grazed in peace, and returned eventually whence they came. There were plenty of bear, stag of two kinds, mostly in velvet, and some antelope, but I was after better game, and left these all well alone.

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VII.

Alligators can by no stretch of imagination come under the heading of 'sport'; still less under that of 'scenery,' except as a blot upon it. I feel therefore rather apologetic in introducing Humphrey. But we were neighbours so long, and amused one another so much, that I feel compelled to mention him.

Immediately below my camp was a pool—long, deep and quiet. Its banks were richly upholstered with the softest sandbanks, some of them nicely shaded by bushes.

It was not till I had twice taken a short cut to camp by swimming across this pool, that it occurred to me as a very likely place for an alligator or two. A pretty safe guess, for most pools in Indian rivers hold these beasts.

It was not long before one appeared taking his ease upon his sandbank, looking as dead as only an alligator can look, and wearing that hideous dead smile common to his race. In reality no animal exists which is more alive or less given to smiling.

In big-game shooting there are many intervals of leisure. Nor did Humphrey appear very *affairé*.

I therefore looked to him to help me wile away those long hot hours. He did not fail me, nor I him. Stretched there in a flat and sprawlsome way on his sandy couch, he looked as disgusting a reptile as any reptile could look. Yet with better luck alligators, which are distinctly of a prehistoric or antediluvian type, and I imagine live to regrettably immense ages, should command some respect or at least interest. But their hideous looks inspire only one feeling, and that is loathing. His presence in the pool must have been known in the village for probably generations, for he regularly drew his rations therefrom,

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at intervals of about a month, in the form of a calf or a cow. A Hindu has a habit of canonising anything really nasty, and I dare say his real name was Saint Humphrey. Anyway, it had been nobody's business to tell me of his presence in the pool, and as the saint was always well fed, perhaps it mattered the less.

Genghis got out the tackle—to wit, a fifty-yard-long rope and a treble-hook about the size of a baby grapnel. The end of the rope was connected to the eye of the hook by a dozen thin cords. An alligator could bite through a rope, and he could bite through some of these cords, but enough would remain in the intervals between his teeth to hold him. The bait was any kind of meat, and the higher the better. Putrid tiger's guts were a certain lure, but at the time we were not stocking any of this line in baits.

Whatever the dainty, it was lapped and wound and inextricably woven into and on the hook, barbs and shank; and further, it was bound thereto with brass picture-wire. All being ready, the game of cross-purposes began. Humphrey won every time. The rules were quite simple. The baited hook was laid on a rock just above water-level. Humphrey had to go away and submerge, and I had to sequester myself fifty yards away, with the free end of the rope, a book and a pipe. About ten minutes were allowed. Then Humphrey appeared camouflaged as a dead leaf, propelled by the breeze slowly over the surface of the pool towards the bait—that is to say, nothing of Humphrey appeared but the tip of his snout, or it may have been a scaly eyelid. In this guise he had approached and seized by the nose and dragged to their doom, how many thirsty kine? Slowly and with many pauses he would blow across till he nuzzled the rock. Then two human-like hands—grey, and scaly and with

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long nails (very horrible-looking hands)—gently imposed themselves on the rock and prised a pair of bandy elbows out of the water, and a pair of jaws full of jagged and irregular yellow teeth. The jaws closed softly on the bait. Then the whole slid back quietly under water and disappeared. The rope began to run out. I allowed thirty seconds, and then struck heartily. The hook came bounding ashore. But in those thirty seconds every shred of meat had been stripped off it. There were never any variations to the game, except that I allowed Humphrey longer and longer to gorge the bait. The result was always the same—meat taken, hook ejected. The mystery remains how he stripped the one from the other, whether in thirty seconds or thirty minutes, and how he always came clear of the hooks. I am inclined to think that Humphrey possessed immense powers of suction, and sometimes sucked the meat off the hook. But this is no real explanation ; and he, being a very secretive fellow, never let on. A modest livelihood awaits him when he is prevailed on to leave his pool and have the whole performance properly staged in London.

Had I wished to play the dirty on Humphrey, I could easily have left the hook out over night, and would probably have found him well home in it next morning. I had done it with others of his kind. But this would have been killing the goose with the golden egg—or, if you like, descending from the heights of dry-fly fishing to the depths of bottom fishing and night-lines. Or I could have planted a bullet with considerable ease in Humphrey's neck. In neither case would I have felt the smallest thrill in entering him in the game-book under the heading ' Mixed.'

At our last séance—for, barring a darkened room, a few tambourines and a mysterious cabinet, the matter

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had become a sort of Maskelyne and Devant affair—the question had finally to be answered, "Did Humphrey know that I was trying to do him a mischief, and that he was defeating me?" or "Did he think that I had taken a fancy to him, and was simply feeding him out of love?" I am inclined to the latter alternative, for after a long and close study of him, I perceived that his besetting sin was a profound self-complacency. Other saints besides Humphrey have stained their earthly garments in the same respect. Humphrey was plainly dead to his own absolute loathsomeness, and failed entirely to realise that the only decent thing about him was his belly-skin, which, when tanned, might have made me a suit-case. This being so, I felt sure that he looked on me as his admirer and cherisher, and probably thought that I was going short myself in order to feed him. In short, it was a matter of cross-purposes throughout. I can picture Humphrey, long after my departure, lolling on his sand-bank, engaged in handing out lies to his beastly little snub-nosed grandchildren. I can hear the nosy snuffle of that unctuous old saurian: "Yes, my dears, dear old granddad has never lacked for admirers. There was that kind gentleman I have mentioned to you before. He had heard of me, and came thousands and thousands of miles to see me. (Did I see you wink, Grace? No? Well, do not do it again.) Day after day he visited me, bringing me cartloads of meat; yes, for days and days, and thousands of carts. Ah! poor old granddad missed him sadly when he went away.—Gilbert, straighten out your tail and look nice if you can't feel nice."

In the London Zoo you can see several little Humphreys—poor specimens—but I always give one of them a good dig with my umbrella and hope it may hurt him a little.

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VIII.

There is one bad black day to record. We picked up a solitary bison's tracks at dawn and came on him lying down in an hour. I fired at him foolishly without quite seeing how he was lying and where I was to hit him. He went away, and we followed blood till it petered out, and then for three hours kept on his tracks with great difficulty. During the long checks, while those tireless sleuth-hounds never ceased scrutinising the ground, I had to wait in the full blaze of the sun, ready to shoot and with the barrels too hot to hold. At last Heera came back to me to warn me to be ready with covering fire, and from thenceforward he climbed a tree every thirty or forty yards. What told him that we were drawing up to the bison, I do not know. Then from a small thorn-tree up which he had climbed, he reached back a silent beckoning finger. I joined him as well as the smallness of the tree and the thorns allowed me, but I was only able to retain my position by violent muscular exertion. Twenty yards off the outgoing tracks, and just visible in the grass, was a pair of horns. The bison had retraced his steps and was lying up. It was impossible to see which way he lay: the grass hid all but the horns. I could hang on no longer, even with the support of Heera's leg round my neck. I guessed and fired. The shot brought the bison rushing under the tree, on his chest, propelled by his hind-legs. He passed away and disappeared. I was too cramped for the second barrel. Heera simply chattered at me with rage. Why had not I given him the second barrel? I said that it was physically impossible, but that it mattered the less, as we should find the bison dead pretty close. "Not matter much?" repeated Heera,

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with frightful malice and scorn. "You'll *never* see him again." Nor did we. We followed till 2 P.M. The checks became longer and longer, and at last, after a solid hour's search, Heera announced that the tracks were completely lost. Be that as it may, we were all beaten by thirst. The trackers knew of a pool. We found it with some difficulty. They drank quarts. I managed two mouthfuls. It was little better than a puddle of hot urine, and had been fouled by every living thing within miles. At evening we reached the river, and a drink and a bathe enabled us to do the last four miles into camp.

Sundials may record *nil nisi serenas horas*, but to imitate sundials would not be recording the whole truth. Hence this account of a black day—a bad maladroit black day, caused by ill-judged shooting, not by bad luck. The blackest thing about it was the thought of that great wounded animal going away to perish, probably of thirst.

IX.

A day or two later saw us peering at two sleeping buffaloes. Between us and the only place for a certain shot at them lay twenty yards of immense dried teak leaves. A silent approach over these was about as feasible as one over twenty yards of empty biscuit-tins. Yet I reached the spot required, and those heavy sleepers still slept. When I fired, one of them got up, looked at me first as if he would and then as if he would not, and finally trotted away. He was unshootable. The other lay so completely still that I almost thought that he still slept. So he did: his last sleep. The bullet had taken him where intended, in the ear. No more neck-shots for me.

The next day proved to be my last. We were not

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after tiger, but it chanced that one had passed along the nulla-bed where we were looking for other tracks. The tiger's were fresh tracks—that night's, but even fresher than we thought at the moment. Half an hour later we chanced still to be on them; and then we heard the tiger speak, the low grumbling rumble of a hungry tiger. For him to have been out at this hour, 10 A.M., in the heat was a fair proof that he had failed to kill anything during the night, and was still supperless but hopeful. On rounding a bend in the nulla-bed, we saw what his hopes were—a herd of tame buffaloes grazing. The tracks immediately began an enveloping movement, and we, who could scarcely have been a hundred yards behind the tiger, although we never saw him, followed suit. We crossed a stream, on the farther bank of which the water was still running into the square masculine tracks of a very big tiger. The buffaloes were now hidden from view. Here, unfortunately, on some bad ground we lost the tracks for about thirty seconds. Then on again a score of yards, till we topped a rise and looked down fifteen feet into the river-bed. A huge bull buffalo lay dead just below us. He must have been struck down within a few seconds of our appearance, and the tiger, hearing our footsteps on the bank just above him from which he had sprung on to the buffalo, had taken six great bounds into a tangle of reeds and jungle and disappeared. The smooth sand gave very plain reading of all that. The tiger had sprung clear fifteen feet down on to the buffalo's neck, in which I could only discover one deep punctured wound and no other mark whatever. From this the blood was still flowing. None but the very biggest tiger could have downed so big a bull so completely, nor indeed would have made the attempt.

The trackers were sent noisily away, and I took post

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on a rock twenty yards away and waited. A vulture did the same on a tree close by. I thought that probably he from his high perch could see the tiger, while he possibly thought that I would not be sitting on my rock without some very good reason. It was then between 10 A.M. and 11 A.M., and we sat till 6 P.M. Twilight and the approach of a heavy storm brought this fruitless vigil to an end. I felt like a joint of meat rather over-cooked, for the May sun had beamed on me all day. Just as darkness came and the storm burst, the trackers appeared with the boat. We pushed off up-stream in a tornado of hot wind with a few scalding raindrops. Luckily the trackers were really skilful river-men, and I had an electric torch. Poling, paddling, towing and pushing, we fought our way up rapids and over submerged rocks, the fish constantly leaping over and sometimes into the boat, attracted, I suppose, by the *orilux*. It was absolutely pitch dark. Towards 9 P.M. we stumbled thankfully into camp. The storm had ceased, but it had brought no relief from the heat. Sleep even in a deck-chair was impossible. From a little village near-by came all night sounds of dolour and wakefulness, the howl of babies and the lowing of kine. Overhead the parched fronds of a tall palm clashed thirstily now and again, but never a breath stirred below.

I decided during that night that I had had enough of it, and that I would on the very next day start for another country, where it always rained, and where the grass was green and people's cheeks were pink. With luck I might yet arrive there in time to smell the hay and hear the nightingale.

As no one had slept that night, it was the easier to start at 3 A.M. next morning and see what was a-doing by the dead buffalo. As we crossed the river-bed, the

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rocks were still unpleasantly hot to the touch, and were generously exhaling the heat they had absorbed the previous day. Three hours later I cautiously crept up the bank beneath which the buffalo lay, peeped over, and there he still lay—untouched. We had evidently so frightened the tiger, just as he killed on the previous day, that he had made a clean bolt of it and never come back.

X.

That night we started homewards. There were the six-score miles to do, and they were done to the last long furlong. Least said soonest mended. At the railway station I called up the cartmen for payment. They had done me right well, had always been cheery and helpful, and I wanted to do them well. Patriarchally I endowed them with my herd of young buffaloes (not knowing what else to do with them), together with their agreed-on payment and a not unliberal douceur. But it was the old story, which payment far in excess of expectation so often and rightly brings about. Payment and buffaloes were refused, turbans were dashed on the ground, and the behaviour of those cartmen was as unseemly and truculent as such humble folk dared to exhibit. Leaving my live-stock to get into the luggage van and follow their patriarch to England if they so wished, or to desert him and remain behind at large, I hopped into my railway carriage, reflecting on the ingratitude of man. Man, however, speedily came to himself, and his innocent little bluff having failed, approached with tears and penitence, and accepted payment, and speedily removed both himself and the buffaloes.

Then the train started. For some miles it ran by the road, then turned and crossed it. The road kept

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straight on. It was one of the kind that have no turning.

Forty-eight hours later, I was boozing—no other word quite expresses it—iced water from a sweating silver flagon on the dining-saloon table of a homeward-bound ship. Was this not better than the old canvas water-bag and its tepid contents? Were not the cool and dustless decks preferable to that long dusty road? And the blue sea to the leafless forest? The answer was in the negative. I was already hankering to get back.

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VIII.

THE EYES OF MASAMBO.

THIS is the story of Masambo, the other party—the leopard—being merely incidental thereto. And I have called the story "The Eyes of Masambo" because although Masambo, with his pretence of witchcraft (but of that you shall judge for yourself), his almost uncannily intimate knowledge of wild beasts and his gift of woodcraft, is really a very remarkable person, those eyes of his have come to supply a sort of idiom to the local dialect. For one man to say to another So-and-so has Masambo's eyes is equivalent to his saying that So-and-so can see farther through a brick wall than most people. Also, through Masambo's eyes I have seen many strange things which I should otherwise have overlooked.

It was at about nine o'clock of an October morning that the leopard came into the story. I was in my office —an ordinary out-station office in northern Rhodesia— when Yalenga, my head messenger, dashed in with the astonishing intelligence that a leopard was in the vegetable garden.

Now in Africa I have suffered many and strange things. I have had snakes in my bedroom, scorpions in my boots, and once, but once only, boiled frogs in my bath. (This last, I might mention, was entirely due to the carelessness of a native servant, to whom I was forced to explain that bath-water, when drawn from strange water-holes in the

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dark, *must* be strained.) Leopards in the vegetable garden was a new departure, however, and I hurried to investigate.

Below the garden runs a small river, a tributary of the Zambesi, and as I reached the spot the leopard, who had doubtless been drinking there, charged grunting up the bank. At the top he paused an instant, then, with a curse snarled over his shoulder, was gone at one bound into the waiting forest. That one brief sight of him—of the smoky-yellow hide of him, the litheness of him and the hate, the snaky head almost split in half in a furious snarl, the fierce beautiful eyes with the sunlight caught in them, had gone to my head like wine, and I had shouted for dogs and men and had set out to do the impossible—to hunt down a leopard in the forest that was his own.

But I had not reckoned on my Barotse, who are, I believe, the poorest trackers in all Africa. So it was that mid-day found me, leopardless and lunchless and altogether unhappy, sitting in a patch of comfortless shade, surrounded by panting dogs and limp-looking natives, waiting for sufficient energy to be restored to me to face the long tramp home. It was at this moment that Masambo elected to enter my service.

Where he came from I do not know, nor how he had managed to get so close to us without being seen. The forest there was fairly open, with tall slender trees standing on a patchwork carpet of light and shade, and it was as if one of the shadows had detached itself and changed, in the twinkling of an eye, into the strange-looking native who stood suddenly before me.

He was young—not more than twenty I should say. He was, for a native, undeniably good-looking. He was also unquestionably very dirty. That apart, he might, from the waist upwards at least, have posed for a study

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of an African Pan. Below, he fell off deplorably, even to spindle-shanks and feet that seemed at least a size too large for him. He stood, leaning on a spear, regarding me curiously.

"Who are you?" called out Yalenga, and "What manner is this of coming into the presence of my highly important master? Do you not know that he is a great *murena* (chief)? Down on your tail, dog, and make suitable obeisance." The stranger waited until he had finished.

"I am Masambo," he said, "and I have no tail." He turned to me. "It is in my mind," he remarked politely, "that the *murena* is looking for a leopard."

"How do you know what I am looking for?" I asked.

"By that," said Masambo, pointing with an absurdly eloquent big toe to where, between us, in a patch of whitish sand, was the clear impress of the leopard's foot.

Yalenga resents my habit of hobnobbing with casual and shabby strangers. "You who know so much," he broke in, "do you know where the leopard is now?"

"I can find out," was the surprising answer. "Have I the *murena's* permission to use a little magic?" I nodded assent.

Masambo walked over to a patch of rubber-creeper, tore out a strand and proceeded to twist it into the form of a rough bracelet.

"This man is a *muloyi*" (a witch-doctor), whispered Yalenga hopefully. (The Government which I serve does not encourage witch-doctors, and nothing at that moment could have given Yalenga greater pleasure than my order for Masambo's instant arrest.) I smiled inwardly and strolled over to see what the magician was doing.

He had returned to the leopard's spoor and was kneeling before it. As I watched, slowly and with infinite care he

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took up a little loose sand out of the footprint, placed it in his mouth and chewed it. I could hear it gritting between his teeth. The experiment seemed to be barren of results, for Masambo shook his head in a dissatisfied manner and spat out the sand. Another pinch of sand was taken up, but this he blew upon gently until there remained only a few grains adhering to his moist palm. These he studied intently, turning his hand this way and that the better to read whatever riddle they held for him. Then, by way of variety I suppose, he bit a piece out of the rubber-creeper and chewed that. Another expressive shake of the head, and the rubber-creeper, too, was discarded.

" Will the *murena* give me some fire ? "

He caught the box of matches I threw to him and laid it reverently on the ground. Knowing himself for what he is, Masambo saw real magic in the little sticks that break into fire at a touch, and, being Masambo, borrowed fresh dignity from the mere temporary possession of them. Portentously he set about his second experiment. First he scraped a hollow where the leopard's spoor had been, and scattered the sand thereof to the four points of the compass. Into this he crammed a double handful of dried leaves and grass. A match and a muttered invocation did the rest, and Masambo, leaning forward, stared with brooding eyes into the thin film of smoke that arose.

My natives had gathered round and were watching him with goggle eyes.

Masambo jumped suddenly to his feet, his eyes flashing, his whole being transformed. " If the *murena* will follow I will take him to the leopard," he announced.

" Where is he ? " I asked.

" He is now behind us," was the surprising answer. " He went forward only a little way after the *murena*

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gave up following him. When he found that he was no longer pursued, being very thirsty, he turned back towards the river. That, at least, is what my magic tells me."

Now all this I should have known without being told. I had disturbed the leopard while he was drinking. I had driven him steadily all day away from the river. Ahead of us there was no water within a day's march. What could be more natural then, as soon as all sound of pursuit had died away behind him, than his turning back towards the river ?

But if Masambo's magic was nothing more than the fancy-dress in which he clothed his common-sense, his tracking and his woodcraft, during the next twenty minutes or so, were a revelation to me. I have hunted with the Masarwa—pure bushmen of the Kalahari—but I have yet to see Masambo's equal. He strode ahead of us at an easy four miles an hour, seeming scarcely to glance at the ground. Yalenga was frankly sceptical—at first. " Is this leopard a bird, that he should seek it in the sky ? " I heard him mutter.

Drifted sun-rotted leaves covered the ground, and though I looked carefully, I could see no signs of leopard's or any other spoor. Under a dense-foliaged *muzauli* tree Masambo swung round in a sort of hairpin-bend.

" Here is where the leopard turned," said he.

" Where ? " asked Yalenga, " I see no spoor."

" Nevertheless the spoor is there," replied Masambo, " else how could I follow ? "

" As wild dogs follow—with their noses," said Yalenga meaningly.

Masambo checked in mid-stride. " See here," he said, " and here—and here." I stooped to where he pointed and saw a few minute grains of sand adhering to the upper surface of a leaf. " The spotted one is very clever,"

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chuckled Masambo, " but he is not so clever as I. He doesn't know that between his toes he is all full of sand, so that wherever he goes he must leave a little sand sticking to the leaves to show me where he has gone. *That* is my magic."

For some two or three miles Masambo led us, striding ahead with that same fine air of detachment from the task in hand. Now and again he paused. He would check and bend forward his body tense as a drawn bow ; seeming not to be listening, but rather to be using some clairvoyant sense. At times I read amusement in his face, at others chagrin. Once, when he paused with a frown on his face, I asked him at a venture what the leopard was doing at that particular moment. His reply was lengthy and involved. I gathered that the leopard was again aware that we were on his track and was considerably annoyed about it.

" He knows that he is being followed," Masambo said, " and he wishes to turn aside and escape. Also, he is very thirsty and so is in two minds about the matter. My magic, however, is too strong for him. See——," he ploughed a great scrape-mark to the left of the spoor and another to the right. " Now he can go neither to the right nor the left, but must go straight on."

A little farther on Masambo stopped abruptly. " Walk softly, *murena*," he whispered. " The leopard is now very close." He pointed to where, some three or four yards ahead, a number of long-legged, pale-brown ants were scuttling about their nest in a state of great excitement. Masambo was laughing silently. " He walked on their house," he explained. " He *is* a fool. See how they run about, these little ones, telling everybody that the spotted one put his big feet on them only a moment ago."

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So for a mile or more we walked very softly, making no more than a whisper of sound on the carpet of leaves, but that leopard was a master of the art of self-concealment and never so much as the tip of his spotted tail did we see. And never was a more ignominious end to a hunt.

It may have been the leopard's own magic—for Masambo asserts that the leopard, in common with the lion and the hyæna and one or two other exalted beasts, has the power of using the black arts in a mild form—that caused me to choose the wrong moment for calling a halt. That I did so is only too certain, and that I was dead dog-tired is my only excuse. I wanted to sit down, but above all I wanted to smoke. I would go on afterwards—for, after all, was not the leopard taking me in a roundabout way homewards?—but a smoke was imperative.

Handing my rifle to Yalenga, I called out in a low voice to Masambo to stop. As I did so there was a diabolical snarl that nearly made me swallow my pipe in sheer panic—so near it was and so charged with deadly hate—and the leopard, a raging black-and-yellow streak, dashed out from behind a small bush, and in a couple of bounds was gone.

There was a long silence, broken at last by Yalenga. "If the *murena* had been ready," he said, "by now we had killed that leopard."

Masambo was more tactful. "We will kill him another day," he remarked airily. "He is a fool, that one—he always was a fool. *I* know him."

The claim sounded extravagant, but I was to learn in the months that followed that Masambo did indeed know the beasts of his own particular wild—leopard from leopard and lion from lion—as well as a farmer may know his own cattle. And that leopard *was* a fool, as was amply demon-

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strated some months later when he allowed himself to be surrounded on an island in a marsh and speared to death by a party of Barotse herdsmen.

Well, I had gone out that day to get a leopard and I had got Masambo instead. When I reached home that evening he came and knelt down before me.

"This person," said Yalenga stiffly, "says that he wishes to enter the *murena's* service."

"As what?"

"As the *murena's* dog," broke in Masambo, "to go with him when he goes hunting. To be his eyes—there is no one who can follow spoor as I can. Also, there is my——"

"Your magic?" I said, trying not to smile.

"Even so," he replied complacently.

So I engaged the whole trinity of him: the dog, the eyes and the magician, and, in a jumble of those capacities, he has served me ever since. His 'magic' has been a little wearying at times, but his woodcraft has more than made amends. And there have been long hours in hunting camps in which he has told me wonderful tales of the time when men and beasts walked the earth on equal terms. Masambo has told me of a remote ancestor of his, a mighty man of the woods, who occasionally condescends to accompany him in the spirit on wonderful journeys. "When I am with him," he says, "I can pass the time of day with the elephant herds and with the lion, none molesting me—save only the rhinoceros—for I am then a spirit like my father of old."

This is a favourite theme with Masambo, and when the mood is on him he will elaborate it wonderfully. He will tell of how, when he is on these spirit-wanderings, all desire to kill, and all desire for meat and drink, leaves him. "After such a journey I am very thin," says he.

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The rhinoceros? Well, it appears, you see, that even in the olden time Masambo's ancestor was not on good terms with the rhino. Nobody could be on terms of even the barest civility with such a bad-tempered beast, and as he does not care two hoots whether a person is a spirit or not, Masambo, whatever form he happens to be in at the moment, has a pretty uncomfortable time when he is in country where rhinos are numerous.

I have to confess that there have been times when I have felt towards Masambo much as a rhinoceros would.

Once he lost me a certain shot at a lioness whose spoor we had followed for miles, simply because of his stomach's lust for the flesh of a tortoise. I have made it a rule never to interfere with Masambo when he is engaged in spooring, and when, just as every sign told us that we were almost treading on the heels of the lioness, he walked suddenly away at right-angles to our course, I let him go without question. When he returned, some five minutes or so later, carrying a large live tortoise, whose spoor, crossing that of the lioness, had so tickled Masambo's gastric juices that he simply had to follow it up, my desire to kick him violently from behind was only restrained by my greater desire to shoot that lioness. We hurried on, and possibly made too much noise in the process, for, coming to the lip of a small valley, we saw the lioness streaking away through the bush at a pace that made the thought of further pursuit seem absurd. The few remarks that I felt constrained to make to Masambo on the subject seemed to fail of their effect, for I heard him mutter to himself that whereas one could not eat lionesses, where in all this hungry world could one find a tastier morsel than a well-nourished tortoise?

The truth of the matter is that Masambo, however he may thrive on tortoises and lizards and such, has no

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stomach for heroics. The amazing microscopic power of his eyes, which enables him to follow the spoor of a hare across bare rock, apparently by the displacement of a dust too impalpable to be visible to ordinary sight, makes the tracking of heavier animals child's play to him, but when it comes to mixing things with a lion who has decided that he would rather fight than run, Masambo will inevitably find urgent business to call him elsewhere.

To be quite fair, however, I must admit that on one occasion when a fracas with a wounded and justly angry lion nearly ended in a mauling for Yalenga and myself, Masambo did not run away. He climbed a tree instead. There is no false shame about Masambo, and I was quite charmed with his admission that he had simply regarded the lion with such repugnance that he just found himself up that tree.

The true Barotse, on the other hand, and of these Yalenga may be taken as a typical example, are indisputably a brave people.

A mere dozen of them, armed only with spears, will surround and kill a lion which has been molesting their cattle ; taking the attendant risks with admirable unconcern and their wounds boastfully. And, if the season be a slack one, if there is no beer-drinking to be done and no amiable litigation to be settled in the nearest *khotla*, or native Court, they may even go to considerable trouble and exertion in following up a lion who kills one of their women-folk (it will be noted that in the Barotse table of comparative values cattle take precedence of wives), and they will fill him so full of spear-holes that his hide, when it is dried and hung on the council-tree in the village as a warning to other evil-minded beasts, appears only as a patch of daylight held together by strips of skin.

And what a business it is, this killing of lions with

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spears! Only recently a headman of my district, one Mubita, was sitting one night about bedtime with others of his village, when a great clamour arose in the cattle-kraal. Picture the scene if you can. Mubita and his cronies yawning their heads off, but reluctant, each one of them, to exchange the cheerful firelight for the darkness of their huts. Then the sudden infernal uproar without. The bellowing and stampeding of the terrified cattle, the short deep-throated *hough!* of the lion at his butcher's work, the agonising long-drawn moan of an ox in its death-throes, the scream of a frightened woman. In the silence that follows, what wonder if each man's heart is hammering in his throat? But Mubita is of the old Barotse stock, and his honour is in his herds. "*A lu yeng*" (let us go), he says, and, each man taking his spears, they follow him. Some sort of a torch has been lighted, and by its flare they see the dark mass of the cattle huddled at one end of the kraal. At the other end a shapeless something is lying. There is a vague stir of movement about it. Is it he—the cattle-slayer? The torch goes out and blackness folds them round like a blanket. "Bring another torch," Mubita calls out. The darkness is alive. There is the strained breathing of the scared cattle, and a low growl instantly suppressed; a sniffing, and a noise as of a heavy body being dragged along the ground. No sound else, save to each of the listening men the beating of his own heart.

Another torch is brought, and another, and the shadows that leap to life whirl about the kraal like the spokes of a great wheel: shadows of men, of poles, of the horns of oxen; distorted, conflicting, enormous. They converge and shorten as the torches draw near; and separate, shorten and point like accusing fingers to where, above the dead ox, crouches the butcher, his lips writhed back

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above the great teeth, his flaming eyes throwing back the challenge of the torches.

" Shout, all together," commands Mubita in a low voice. They shout. The answer is grim enough. In the confusing play of shadows they have hardly seen him move, but the lion has slid forward and is crouched, a dozen paces nearer to them ; tense as a coiled spring, as still as death. Only the incessantly twitching tail and the lighted eyes show him to be terribly alive. This is no craven lion, as some are, to be scared away by shouting. He is going to fight for his meat.

Mubita steps forward a short pace, a light throwing-spear balanced in his hand. " Steady all," he counsels in a fierce whisper. " Hold yourselves, and when he charges—*slay !* "

The spear is a flicker of light as it goes, true to its mark, to quiver in the lion's shoulder. Mubita leaps aside, his second spear ready in his hand. " *Bulaya !* " (kill !) he yells, and the slavering brute, like death itself unleashed, is on them.

But luck is on the side of the spears, and the end comes with almost incredible swiftness. In the dark it had been a different matter, or in broad daylight even, but here the lion's charge has taken him into a circle of blinding torch-light and leaping shadows ; a circle of death hedged with points of steel that bite into his very vitals, and are withdrawn and plunged again and again.

Even after he is dead the insensate fury of stabbing goes on, until from sheer arm-weariness the killers are forced to desist, and draw back to stare, as men amazed, at the work of their hands.

. . . . . .

This story was told to me by Mubita, when I was camped one mid-day within a few hundred yards of his

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village, and I have tried to draw here the picture that he made me see. Mubita is a born story-teller, as indeed are most Africans, and if there is any essential difference between his version and mine, it can only be, I think, in that mine is the less picturesque.

When the light of morning came, he told me, he and some two or three others had repaired together to the kraal to learn how the cattle had fared during the remainder of that eventful night. Save for the one dead ox, he said, they were all right: frightened, huddled together, staring stupidly at the reeking patch where the murdered lion had lain, but uninjured. And none, thanks be to God, was missing. You never could tell, he informed me gravely, what frightened oxen might not do: break down the kraal, break their legs, stampede and be lost and go wandering for days, a prey to wild dogs and hyænas.

So they were much uplifted in that worse had not befallen the cattle. Only, he said, at the back of the kraal, where was some slight growth of bushes, they came suddenly upon two men, and one was that Nyambe, who was own brother to Mubita, and the other a stranger that had come to their village looking for a wife, lying there in the still light of early morning all dabbled in dew and blood.

In the excitement and confusion of the night they had not been missed, and so it was something of a shock to come upon them suddenly like that; Mubita's brother with his bowels torn from him, and the stranger with his head so crushed "that we knew him not, save by a charm that he wore around his neck." "We were amazed," Mubita went on, "and we asked ourselves, 'How came this thing to be?' But when we made search we found the spoor of four lions there. *Four* lions! Of these only one lion—he whom we slew—had entered the kraal.

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The others had remained outside, and Nyambe that was my brother, and the stranger, when they ran in the darkness to join us, had run into them. And I, Mubita, who am responsible to Government for the affairs of my village, make report of this, so that you, *murena*, may strike the names of these two men from out of the books in which they are written."

To my inquiry as to whether they had made any effort to follow up the three lions and revenge themselves for the deaths of Nyambe and the matrimonially inclined stranger, Mubita returned a decided negative. The ground was iron-hard with drought, I was told; there was no spoor, none that they could follow anyway. "We are Barotses, not bushmen," he declared. And in that declaration is to be found the reason why Barotseland still encloses more lions than almost any other part of southern Africa.

Par exemple, there was the man-eater of the Mashi River, who killed eleven people in a trifle under five weeks, and grew so puffed-up in the pride of his immunity from all reprisal that he took to hunting down men and women in broad daylight, almost within sight and sound of their fellows. "He is no lion," said the angry but helpless Barotse; "he leaves no spoor. Obviously he is an evil spirit and flies with wings."

But I laid Masambo on the evil spirit's trail, and its skin, which, by the way, was conspicuously wingless, and in every other respect resembled that of any well-conditioned black-maned lion, became one of my most treasured possessions.

But of that hunting I may perhaps tell later.

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IX.

OU-OPP SAHIB.

In Bengal the plains are so vast and so monotonous that you may ride straight ahead for a week, as we had done, and still, for all that the country has changed, fancy yourself to be in the place that you started from. On either side still stretches the illimitable grey ploughed land, marked off with the low grey ridges that are the only boundary marks. And the same tiny cattle stand about in the same hot glare. Or else it is an unploughed scene, and the jungle grass grows stiff and high, shutting off the runs of pig and leopard, and those tarns and lost water-courses that are thronged with wild-fowl of every sort, from the humble dhobie bird to the bulky, magnificent pelican.

We had kept for the most part to the great road that runs north to the hills. Through all our long ride it, too, had preserved its unchanging character. I wondered what the Tommies used to think of it in the days they marched that way—hundreds and hundreds of miles through the dust that is inches deep on the sides of the road, and thickly powdered to the tops of the trees that aisle it. The road is always at the same level, a few feet above the rest of the plains, so that it may not be flooded in the rains. Were the Tommies fascinated by the endless, hazy, golden sameness? Or did the sand in their boots and in their throats and the eternal heat that beats down

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through the trees and gets trapped in the shade monopolise their attention and their curses? They go by train now, and the road is left to the natives on foot or on little shambling tats or in bullock-carts that seem mere pillars of cloud, so much dust do the patient beasts kick up, or on camels that are driven down from the dry north to be sold to Mahometan dwellers on the plains, to be sacrificed at one of their festivals. Poor camels, they make but thin offerings when they come to the end of their journey.

The road had also been left to us—that is to say, the Collector and myself—and I had seen many things of interest upon it, including a day-old elephant that a zemindar in one of the villages called us in to look at, if it so pleased us. The zemindar himself was a thin, splendid old man, a Mahometan, with the mien and manner of a Hebrew patriarch, but he was famed chiefly for his dacoities and his oppression of the poor. He looked supremely beneficent as he showed off his absurd embryo of a mammoth, staggering against its mother's legs and staring painfully, with large blue eyes, at the crowd that squatted to admire it. It seemed to think Bengal a curious place, and it is. It was on the following day that we came in the afternoon to the rising ground. We saw it before us quite suddenly, on our left—land that climbed, and it gave us quite a thrill.

"By Jove, do you see that?" said the Collector.

"I do," I said, "it's a hill," and had to soothe my mare, who was as excited as I. If horses have fancies, I think she was feeling herself like Alice after she had got through the looking-glass. That is the way I felt when we rode on for a mile and the hill on our left did not vanish, but continued—not growing much higher, it is true, but maintaining its slope and revealing upon its side patches of dog-rose that grew thicker and thicker till they closed

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into a tree-jungle. Presently a side track appeared, also on the left and rising, and the Collector said: "I shouldn't be surprised if the dak bungalow were up there somewhere. Let's see."

We turned our horses into it, and they, tickled by the resistance so strangely presented to their feet, broke into a gallop and took us in less than a minute to the top. There, sure enough, was a dak bungalow, and a view as fine as from a mountain. For the hill—it was only a great sandhill clothed at the back with jungle—in front gave sheer on to the great valley of the Naharuhda—a sacred river, which, like so many Bengal rivers, is ever pouring the sand before it as it goes, so that even while it digs its channel it is silting it up, and wastes itself in crystal shallows, and bends to the least obstruction. Bengal rivers are not unlike Bengal men, and if the Englishman wishes either to keep to one channel, he must dig it for them, removing all hindrances from start to finish. But this is to moralise, even as a Babu might.

Up on the hill a little wind was blowing, so that one might almost have fancied oneself on some sea-cliff at home, overlooking the sand at the low tide. The illusion was dispelled by the appearance of a sub-inspector of police, of whom the Collector proceeded to make inquiries, official and otherwise. He was one of the sub-inspectors who believe in knowing very little, and keeping that to himself. I do not know what he said about dacoities, but I do know that the closest cross-examination could not extract from him either that there were any chickens to be had for our dinner or that he knew anything about shikar in the neighbourhood.

"But there must be some," said the Collector. "Think. Are there not duck or teal?"

We could quite plainly from the hill behold two Brah-

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miny ducks, floating fat and yellow on the limpid stream. Not that Brahminy ducks count.

"I do not think it, your Honour," said the sub-inspector.

"And no bagh—panther or tiger?"

"I do not think it, your Honour."

"Does nobody go shooting in the neighbourhood—none of the Babus?"

"I do not think it, your Honour."

But the last denial was too much for the feelings of the dak bungalow attendant, who had hovered inquisitively into our presence.

"May it please your Honour," he said to the Collector, but with a deprecating glance towards the sub-inspector, "there is without doubt shikar in the jungle."

The Collector's face brightened.

"Also," said the dak man quickly, seeing that he was making a good impression, "there is one who knows much shikar, and lives not far away."

"Who is that?"

"Ou-opp Sahib."

"Ou-opp Sahib," repeated the Collector; "a Sahib of the name of Ou-opp?"

"Yes, your Honour," broke in the sub-inspector, "Sigi Ou-opp Sahib. He shoot many panther."

If you are a Bengali, and you find that your own statements and attitude are not winning so much approval as the statement and attitude of some other person, you do not waste time and possibly the favour of a superior by being rigidly consistent. On the contrary, you at once adopt the other person's *rôle*, thereby recommending yourself and taking the wind out of the other person's sails. The Collector dislikes this habit. "Who is Sigi Ou-opp Sahib?" he therefore asked of the khitmatghar.

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"Your Honour," began the sub-inspector, "he is a young man."

"I asked the khitmatghar," said the Collector. "Bear in mind, sub-inspector, that you know nothing whatever about shikar. You have just said so. Let the khitmatghar speak."

The khitmatghar, much gratified, began—

"Your Honour, Sigi Ou-opp he is a young man. He shoot many panther."

"And he lives near here, does he?" said the Collector.

"He live in the village," said the khitmatghar earnestly. "He shoot many panther."

"And you're quite sure Sigi Ou-opp is a Sahib?"

The khitmatghar was a little shaken by having to stick to one statement so often, but he stuck to it nevertheless.

"He is a young man," he said, "Sigi Ou-opp Sahib. He shoot many panther."

"Well, then," said the Collector, "perhaps you will send a message to Ou-opp Sahib and ask if he will come round to the bungalow and tell us about panthers."

"Yes, your Honour," said the khitmatghar.

"And I get chicken for your Honour," said the sub-inspector.

"There aren't any chickens to be got," said the Collector. "Still, they may as well be here in good time for dinner."

The sub-inspector saluted, and went off somewhat crestfallen to find that his negative attitude towards things in general had not been the success he hoped for, and probably meditating vengeance on the khitmatghar.

"You never know with some of these men," said the Collector as we entered the bungalow, "what the truth is. The sub-inspector, who is remarkably stupid about his actual duties, may really know nothing about shikar.

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On the other hand, he may know a lot, and not want to tell us."

"Why?" I asked.

"Difficult to say. He may think that if we hear of panthers we shall stay a day longer, and find out something against him. Some villagers might turn up with a petition, or some zemindar who has quarrelled with him may accuse him of extorting bribes. Anyhow, Ou-opp Sahib sounds more promising, though why Sahib I can't think. Sahib always means a white man, and there can't be any white man living here now. Funnily enough there were British cantonments here fifty years ago, but I don't suppose that, except for a civilian once in two years for a night, there has been a European near the place since then. Besides, Sigi?"

"It's not a particularly Christian name, certainly," I agreed.

"They've muddled it somehow, depend upon it," said the Collector, and we had to leave it at that until we should see Ou-opp Sahib.

As a matter of fact, the chickens came first. I do not know where they came from, but one of them flew in as if from the jungle with at least twelve villagers and the khitmatghar in pursuit. It was corralled in the verandah of the bungalow, and I think I got it for dinner. It must have had a fine cross-country run. It was after dinner that a note was brought in from the village by a small brown boy in a yellow garment. The Collector read it aloud—

"I have the one-ar inform you that

"SER

"Pleas let me know the you wish to go out for Shooting to morrow or nat. if you wish to go then what time.

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"I get a Khubhur for a panther Cloce near cross the re-ve-ar weast side, I hope the you get it to morrow

"Your most Obduntly

"C. G. WEBB."

"C. G. Webb," repeated the Collector—"so he is a white man after all. At least, he may be. Some of the letter sounds British," he grunted. "I wonder what kind."

The Collector grunted again, and I understood the shyness that Anglo-Indians have for white men who have disappeared from among their kind in India. They are not much sought after, for in their persons they have, as it were, betrayed the West to the East. Probably the causes of such disappearances are sordid enough—just such causes as drive a man downhill in his own country. Out here the hill seems steeper, and the fall into a more bottomless abyss. And those who go down to it must surrender not only ambition and friends and self-respect, but hope itself—the hope of ever mixing again with his own people, or seeing the faces that understand, or sharing the memories which are all their former life.

"Of course he can't be very down on his luck or he would not show up at all," said the Collector, and wrote off a note to C. G. Webb Sahib naming eight o'clock for the starting time next morning.

Punctually at that hour Ou-opp Sahib presented himself before the bungalow, and as though resolved to elude all ordinary formulas turned out to be an entirely brown young man. At least, his colour was brown, and he had the small features of a slim Bengali. In dress, on the other hand, he was English. He wore a solar topi, knickerbockers, puttees and a white jacket. Indeed, all his things had once been white, but that was some time

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before, and the dhobie had not seen them for many weeks. I glanced at his face again to make sure that disacquaintance with the sacred waters of the Naharuhda might not account for its brownness too. But it was not so. His colour was Indian born, and he had the eyes of a Bengali who takes strong drugs. Only, behind it all—or mixed up with it all—there was a jaunty, disdainful, damn-the-consequences appearance that was not native. Now a Bengali is often jaunty, and to his inferiors he is invariably disdainful. But in his freest and easiest and most contemptuous mood he is very, very careful about the consequences if they are in any way likely to affect himself. Consequences were clearly nothing to this young man. He saluted slightly, and in reply to the Collector's inquiries showed himself truly laconic.

"Ah," said the Collector, "you're the Mr Webb who sent me the letter last night."

"Yes, sir."

"I suppose you've done a good deal of shikar round here? What sort?"

"All sort," said Ou-opp Sahib.

"Including panthers," said the Collector.

"Yes," said Ou-opp Sahib. He had not waved his hand, but he gave me the impression of having waved his hand as though to signify that panthers were of very small account indeed.

"Tigers too?" asked the Collector.

"I have shooted the tigers. No tigers here now."

There was nothing boastful in his speech, even though it suggested that Ou-opp Sahib had rid the district of tigers; and, as though to emphasise the difference between his British curtness and the full flow of the true Bengali, a fat middle-aged man, who had apparently accompanied him up from the village, and who turned out to be the

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schoolmaster, inserted himself at this point into the conversation.

"Oh yes, your Honour, Ou-opp Sahib have shot many tigers. He shoot the tiger on foot. He have in his house the skin of the tiger. He shoot also many panther. He have the skin of many panther."

I never ascertained precisely what the schoolmaster's hours and duties were in Bengal; but I noticed that if an opportunity ever presented itself of enlarging his mind by contemplating a Sahib, or exchanging views with him, or assisting him in a hunt, he is always ready to quit his desk and follow the gleam. The scholars, perhaps, do home-work. It is not a bad plan, and the schoolmaster improves his English—which is apt to be more grammatical than idiomatic. He cannot rid himself of the idea that our conversation runs on the lines of "The cat eats the rat. The rat eats the cat. The cat is not the bat."

Ou-opp Sahib looked rather bored by the schoolmaster's eulogies, just as an Englishman might have done; and it was only when the Collector began a discussion of what jungle we were to try that he showed any interest.

"I think the jungle to the weast," he said. "I think a panther there."

"All right; I leave it to you," said the Collector.

"You have the elephants?"

"Two," said the Collector. "You will go on our second elephant with my chuprassie? You've brought a gun?"

"Yes," said Ou-opp Sahib, and called to the small boy who had brought the note the evening before. With much pride the boy handed to him a muzzle-loading gun, and with much nonchalance Ou-opp received it.

"The elephants are ready?" he inquired.

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The Collector supposed they were. For about an hour they had been having their morning baths in the Naharuhda, lying flat while their mahouts climbed about them with buckets and swabbed their upper hides. Afterwards they had retired, all black and shiny, to the shade of a peepul-tree and begun the breakfast of green tree-tops which they had brought in for themselves. But it seemed there was to be a hitch. One of the mahouts was in waiting to say that his elephant had strained herself, and would be unable to go hunting.

"I don't believe it," said the Collector, and we all went over to where the elephants stood. "Now let's see this strain," he went on—"off fore leg is it? Let's see it walking."

The mahout salaamed and called to the great creature to lift him up. Then he made it walk towards us. On it came, walking on three legs, with the fourth held up pathetically like a hurt dog's. Also it rolled its trunk as a man rolls his eyes in anguish. There seemed to me no doubt that it was badly strained.

But Ou-opp Sahib had drawn the Collector aside and was whispering to him, and after a moment the Collector said—"Let the mahout get down."

The mahout got down somewhat unwillingly.

"Now let the mahout call to the elephant to come towards us."

A little crowd had collected from nowhere in particular, as it always does in India if there is anything of interest to be seen, and with genial faces waited for the experiment. The mahout called in the elephant language, and calmly and steadily, without the least sign of lameness, the elephant walked towards us. Judging from the native faces, one might have supposed that a somewhat commonplace miracle had taken place. But judging from the

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Collector's voice as he spoke a few warm words to the mahout, one realised that a somewhat ordinary trick had been tried on. It is not always easy to detect them. In this case the mahout had no doubt for some private reason wanted a day off, and by some simple pressure of the hand or foot had induced the elephant to walk lame. Elephants can be taught almost anything, and pitted against the combined forces of them and their mahouts a sahib is sometimes helpless. Luckily, once he had been outbluffed the mahout had not the fortitude to try any more tricks, and the elephants were pronounced ready in a very short space of time.

It was ' weast ' where the ' Khubhur ' had been got that Ou-opp guided us, into the dense jungle that spread from the back of the bungalow first of all, because that was on the way to the river, and we might, Ou-opp said, strike panthers there also. Very soon, as the elephants stepped up and down its hilly parts, I found myself clutching at the ropes convulsively, for the back of a climbing or descending elephant is no better than a shute. Not the most comfortable of shutes either. But the jungle itself made amends for the trials of riding through it. It was a tangle of cotton-trees, blazing their scarlet flowers from leafless boughs, acacias swinging brown seed-pods a foot long, dark peepuls and scrub oak, girt about with dog-rose and wild plum. Through this intricacy Ou-opp steered the elephants as a captain his ship, pausing at various spots as if they were ports of call for the picking up of panthers. I was too interested in his woodcraft to mind that no panthers as a matter of fact showed themselves at these points, but the Collector did not wholly approve.

" It's all very well," he said ; " they're just the sort of places you would find panthers in, but they're not going to wait for us to come up. And they can hide them-

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selves anywhere in this thickness. What's he up to now ? "

Ou-opp's elephant, which was a little ahead of us, had been halted in a sort of little opening in the undergrowth, and Ou-opp pointed a slim hand as we came up.

" Panther bring calf here," he said briefly.

" Bones of a calf, are they ? " said the Collector, peering down.

" How old do you say ? "

" Two week," said Ou-opp.

" He won't be lying about here, then."

Ou-opp shook his head.

" Soon we find fresh bone," he said, and led us forward. Sure enough, in quite a few minutes we came on much fresher remains, including still recognisable portions of a pariah dog, which, however, Ou-opp disdained to linger over, on the ground that they were a week old. He almost gave the impression of having seen the luckless dog brought there on the day of its demise : yet the jungle must have been inaccessible except to elephants. Indeed from this time on we had to get them to clear the way for us, by tearing off with their trunks such boughs as threatened to sweep us from the pads, and only Ou-opp's calm certainty prevailed on the Collector to remain patient. He hated a thick jungle, reasonably enough, for it gives the leopard every chance of sneaking off unseen when you are just on top of him. Still, he let Ou-opp go ahead, and we came on more remains—calf again this time, and possibly fresher. I do not know why I say possibly, for Ou-opp said they were not more than four days ; and when the chuprassie, who also boasts himself at shikar, differed from him, Ou-opp carelessly supported his own view by pointing to a tree close by which was all scored with leopards' claws, and saying—

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" Panther scratch him four nights off."

The chuprassie gave in before so much detailed woodlore.

A little later, after we had just crossed a dry tangled gully in Ou-opp's wake, we came up to find that he had descended from his elephant and was making a reconnaissance on foot. The chuprassie murmured to us that they had just come on fresh leavings, and that there was a sort of hole in the bank hard by.

" But where is Ou-opp Sahib ? " demanded the Collector.

" He look in, your Honour, to see if panther is there," said the chuprassie ; and following the direction of his finger, we perceived in among the undergrowth, with his gun held carelessly in one hand, Ou-opp down on his knees peering into a hole in the bank.

" Here, I say," began the Collector in tones of remonstrance, " supposing there is a leopard inside."

Ou-opp had already got quietly to his feet again. " Otter," he said, and slung himself up the tail of the elephant. I thought to myself that it would take a good deal to persuade me to go on all fours in front of a leopard's possible lair and decide it was only an otter's.

Another quarter of an hour's thorny going, such as the elephants hate, brought us out of the wooded area on to the edge of the river. Crossing it, we got at once into a great grass waste, and the Collector was about to stop Ou-opp and ask him what his plan of campaign now was, when Ou-opp himself called a halt. His own elephant was at the time close to what might be described as a dense tussock of grass, some ten feet high and the same in diameter, and as ours came up Ou-opp held up his hand warningly.

" What is it ? " asked the Collector, expecting, as he told me, to see a pig break away.

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"Panther, sir," said Ou-opp, and pointed into the tussock. His gun lay carelessly across his knee and his legs swung idly down. It is not a position in which I have ever seen an English gamekeeper, but somehow a smart young English gamekeeper was what Ou-opp reminded me of at that moment. I fancy it was the respectful air of patronage with which he offered something irreproachable in the way of sport to the amateur gentlemen before him. He as good as said, "It will amuse you, but I have seen so much of it"; and while I was being amused, and just beginning to wonder vaguely whether it was usual to shoot at leopards before you saw them, the Collector had let fly into the tussock, there was a snarling hiss, and something had bounded out on the side away from us and was leaving behind it a wake of shivering jungle-grass. After that we were in the thick of the chase. The mahouts had become yelling fiends, the elephants were going at a floundering gallop, the jungle was like a sea swept by a violent squall. Then, as I was wondering how much practice it required to be able to be in an upright position on the pad at the critical moment, we had all, so to speak, pulled up on our haunches, and Ou-opp's mahout was pointing excitedly at a patch of grass. Ou-opp evidently had his eye on it, but his gun still lay across his lap idle. He did not lift it even when, a second later, the leopard, with another sudden snarl, leapt at his dangling legs. The elephant wheeled right round trumpeting.

"Look out," I said involuntarily, and Ou-opp smiled slightly.

"Panther leg broken," he said, and it was so. Owing to that fact it had missed its spring by inches and dropped back in the grass, a bunch of snarling, crouching yellow. Another bullet and it turned over on its side dead, and Ou-opp had dismounted to measure it.

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We went on afterwards for two or three hours, but we got nothing else, and there was no particular reason why we should. Panthers do not herd together, and there is not much beating to be done with two elephants. Only I had the fanciful impression that Ou-opp was not interested in producing another bagh for us. His preserves, so to speak, had been shot over sufficiently for the day. Or else he had an engagement to keep. He courteously showed us more bones here and there, and many fascinating bits of the jungle. His woodcraft was unexceptionable, but it did not result in any more panthers. And on the way back, which took us near the village, he requested to be put down, merely asking laconically, when the Collector acknowledged his services, if we would care for further sport on the morrow. On the morrow, unfortunately, we had to move fifteen miles farther, the Collector explained; whereat Ou-opp Sahib saluted and walked off, having told us no word about himself or his lineage.

We learnt a little about him that evening from one of the chuprassies, who had got it from the schoolmaster; and it appeared from this source that Sigi Ou-opp Sahib was son to yet another Sigi Ou-opp Sahib, who had settled in the village many many years before. What had this original Ou-opp Sahib been? Nothing less than an English Tommy. No wonder that our Sigi had jaunty legs and a devil-may-care bearing that was not of Bengal. The elder Ou-opp had come out for the Mutiny, and had taken part in some of the later operations against hill tribes, for which services Government or a Maharajah had rewarded him with a grant of land in the hill country. Presumably he was not a man of the hills—not of such hills as the Himalayas, at least—and he had sold his hill estate and drifted down to this village, where there was a hill indeed,

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but a hill that only served to make the plains more conspicuous. Here, too, the British cantonments had once been, and here no doubt he had once camped among his own people. I expect that was the call. The regiments had been marched away long since, but he would know where the tents had been, and the drill-ground and the Colonel's bungalow and the canteen and the cells; for him in this sweltering Indian village there would be echoes of the bugles and of the songs that he had sung with his mates. The East—one is told—never changes, but that is true only of the spirit of the East. The landscape changes amazingly fast, especially up country. There in a night a river will change its course and leave leagues of country high and dry, making endless marshes of ploughed land, and itself reappearing, a day's march off, as smooth and as limpid in some new channel. Always, too, the jungle-grass keeps rolling up like a tide, removing landmarks.

We looked for signs of the old cantonments and found none. But Ou-opp Senior had known where to look, and, war-worn and changed into an Indian landowner, he had settled down—that English soldier—in the place which (one may guess) he had come to first as a raw recruit, full of England and fresh as the six months' voyage of those days would leave him from poaching the Squire's rabbits. Now he was a Squire himself, but in a far country, where jackals howl all night and the only keepers that try to stop a man's sport are the great beasts themselves that keep the jungle. And since Squires have land to leave and must have heirs to leave it to, Ou-opp married some brown girl of the village. I choose to think that he knew her before he went off to fight—met her at the village-well when he was off duty and sick for the Pollies and Letties he had left behind him. He liked her soft

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eyes and the poise of her as she held the pitcher on her head, and he helped her to draw up the water, and told her in his alien tongue the things that every woman understands. And she, I expect, was taken by the jauntiness of his legs and the devil in his eyes, and waited for him to come back gladly.

All that is certain is that he did come back and marry, and that the result was the Sigi Ou-opp of our acquaintance. Charles Godfrey? Christopher George? His father must have known, but I doubt if Sigi himself remembered or had known himself to bear any name but Sigi Ou-opp for many years. It was twenty, the schoolmaster said, since the old man died; and all that survived of him—besides Sigi—was the topi and the puttees and the jacket that Sigi wore, and the muzzle-loading gun which he carried so professionally.

Not much to leave? Perhaps not. He was an English soldier, and might have gone home and married an English girl, and left white sons to strengthen our army and help to govern the world. Perhaps before the end he himself may have thought that he had lost too much and was leaving too little, and leaving that to a strange people. Nobody can say. He would not have told that to the Bengali schoolmaster. He could not have told it to Sigi, his son. And even if he thought it, it does not follow that the thought corresponded with the reality. If the legacy he bequeathed was indeed to the East and not to the West, yet in its way it was an English legacy—this son, who, for all his brownness, was the only sportsman to be found in fifty square miles of country.

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X.

LION DAYS.

(PAGES FROM AN EAST AFRICAN JOURNAL.)

THE FIRST DAY.

WHEN I left Nairobi in the spring of 1922 for a three months' trip round Mount Kenya, the shooting of a lion did not figure largely in my calculations. But Africa, with its notorious contrariety, ordered otherwise.

Two visits to East Africa in pre-war days—one of them of over a year's duration—had inclined me to the preservation rather than the destruction of big game. Here remain the choicest of the last few acres upon this man-ridden planet, where, from the date of Noah's Flood, an aboriginal fauna has survived, wild, untrammelled and almost intact. For me the enchantment of Africa's wide waste spaces, no whit abated by familiarity, the wonder of its teeming and infinitely varied animal population, are enough. Not as a destroyer—a 'head-hunter'—but rather as a sightseer, I set out again, equipped in all respects as a tourist with field-glasses, a sketch-book, a camera, maps, because I could neither afford nor endure a guide, round-eyed goggles (all tourists are short-sighted), and a white cotton umbrella lined with green.

But somehow a lion is different. Lion-hunting in his-

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tory and romance alike is literally the 'sport of kings,' and the excitement of it is beyond all telling.

The lion in Africa presents the same curious paradox as the fox in England. He is the finest of all game animals: at the same time he is, from the game preserver's point of view, the worst of vermin. The shooting of a lion compensates in some measure for many other game animals shot during a hunting trip. In one year a lion will kill more 'head' of game than any hunter except some lunatic whose bump of destructiveness is developed to the point of danger.

Shooting alone will never exterminate the lion in Africa. Traps and poison might. But a lion can look after himself. The most probable cause of the lion dying out in Africa—as one day he will—is the extinction of the game on which he feeds. Man wants the earth for himself. One day there will be golf courses where now the giraffe and rhino roam, regattas where now the hippo blows among the reeds.

Sometimes, not often, a lion will turn cattle-thief: more rarely still, man-eater. Deliberately dethroning himself from his royal position as the mightiest hunter of the wilds, he becomes a scrounger in backyards. Such a lion at any rate is better dead. And such a lion it was that first tempted me from the meek path of the tourist.

I had been out a month. On the 19th of May I pitched camp with my small safari (counting in headman, gun-bearers and cook we were but three-and-twenty souls in all) at a water-hole known universally as Maji Chumvi (salt water), wherefore it is marked Sogota Naibor on the maps. This is a big shallow pan of brackish but quite drinkable water, ten acres in extent, lovely to look on in an arid country of rock and sand and scattered bush, and alive with wild-fowl. It lies midway between the

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Guaso Narok and the Guaso Nyiro (the Red and Black rivers), ten miles south-west of their junction. Some of the land is good pasture, as the presence of many zebra attests, but the only human inhabitants were a few Somali squatters with their sheep and cattle.

The Somali belongs to a free and independent nation of fighting men. You cannot frighten a Somali. But being both passionate and excitable, he is not very difficult to annoy. To deprive him of his stock is one of the surest ways I know. This, they told me, a certain lion had been trying to do for some days. So far they had found their primitive weapons inadequate. He was a very big lion, they said. I discounted that. A Somali can be as untruthful as he is brave. They offered me all the help in their power to hunt this lion, and a pony to ride. I was on foot myself, with neither pony nor mule, but I have once sat in a Somali saddle, and that once was enough.

I talked the matter over with Saa. Saa is my headman, a big powerful Akamba, experienced, resourceful, capable and smiling; and not my headman only. He appointed himself successively to the posts of adviser, hunter, gun-bearer, guide, philosopher and friend, all to my very great advantage. He hated lions. He had been mauled once. To compass the death of lions was with him a permanent ambition, and he was a master of the art. Saa, you will find—not the writer—is the hero of these tales.

His present suggestion was that I should sit up for this lion by night. This meant shooting a zebra for bait, building by the carcase a little boma—a strong point of thorn branches—where I could ensconce myself in safety for the night, and shoot, at a range of three yards or so, any lion which might put in an appearance through a small aperture in the circumambient and impenetrable thorns. It is a method which offers many chances of

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success, it has the merit of perfect safety, and from a sporting point of view it is indefensible.

But no advantage, it seemed to me, was too mean to take of a lion which had been behaving so badly as this one.

The preliminaries presented no difficulty. Zebra were common, and you never run short of thorns in Africa. It has been said that " everything in Africa which doesn't bite scratches." Like all generalisations this is not quite accurate. Both the giraffe and the ostrich kick. There was a woman once—but our business is now with lions.

Nightfall the following day found me a mile or more from camp, my two gun-bearers with me, in an elaborate little structure of thorns, with a dead zebra just outside.

This was my first experience of an all-night watch over a kill. I had heard and read much of the romance and wonder of a tropic night—its strange sounds, its mysterious happenings. Reading about it, believe me, is the best way to enjoy it. To begin with, it rained. The night breeze, fitful and uncertain, far from wafting to me vague " Sabean odours from the spicy shore of Araby the blest," came to me laden with a definite smell of damp dead zebra. The moon, past the full, did not rise until eleven o'clock. About the same hour the rain ceased, but not my troubles. Mosquitoes arrived—mosquitoes in swarms, like a boy-scout rally. I say it in all humility, without the smallest admixture of either pride or gratitude: mosquitoes like me. That they kept me awake was their ' one good deed.' Except for the long-drawn shuddering wail of one lone lost hyæna, their thin insistent piping was the only sound to break the absolute stillness. Then came a shock. A horrible raucous noise broke the silence of the night into a thousand quivering fragments; an overwhelming row it sounded. A turtle-dove, hoarse

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with unrequited passion, was calling to his mate from a thorn-tree hard by. Twice he played me this trick, and each time I grabbed my gun. How sure was Byron's instinct for truth: "The love of the turtle now melts into sorrow, now maddens to crime." I would have shot that bird with pleasure.

That, until the last chill hour heralded the dawn, was all.

"Better luck to-morrow night," said Saa consolingly, when I returned to camp in the morning. No doubt the second night is best. The bait by then has warmed to its work. It sends out more searchingly the news of its presence to questing noses afar.

But again that afternoon ominous clouds gathered, and by four o'clock it was raining hard. This on the top of my memories of the night before was too much. All Saa's assurances were unavailing. I had no intention of sitting in the rain all night. It was so easy to persuade myself that shooting blindly through a hedge of thorns was a poor way to do a lion in. It is! But it was the cold and the wet and the prospect of an impenetrable darkness which finally decided me.

It rained all that afternoon and evening. At half-past eight it continued unabated, and for long after I had turned in the rain beat a tattoo on the taut canvas of my tent. I did not fall asleep for a long time—near midnight, I think; but it may have been earlier. The rain had ceased, and there was silence but for the dripping of the trees.

Suddenly from the direction of the kill a lion roared: great full-throated roars rising crescendo roar upon roar until it seemed as though the lion must be close at the back of my tent instead of over a mile away. Then gradually the sounds died away, diminuendo, into little

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panting grunts. The lion's grace before meat ! Doubtless that was it. But lying snug in my tent instead of out there in the wet, I seemed to detect in it a jeering note as though the lion was laughing at me quietly—laughing in his mane.

. . . . . .

An hour before dawn I was up and after him, Saa, my two gun-bearers and three or four porters with me. It was ' pit murk,' as the Scots say. Slowly the light came. It is an ineradicable fallacy handed down by generations of fiction-mongers that dawn and dusk come everywhere in the tropics like a great lamp opened and shut.

As we approached the kill it was just getting light enough to shoot. Quietly we crept through the thin scrub to the place where the dead zebra lay. There was nothing there. The carcase had disappeared.

To the three experts with me—Saa and the two gun-bearers, Kazimoto and Songoro—the ground told the whole story. Saa I have already mentioned. Kazimoto and Songoro need a word of introduction.

Kazimoto was a small wizened Akamba of a certain age, who contrived to conceal under an aspect of intense and anxious earnestness a disposition which was naturally merry, care-free and completely reckless. He had the undauntable courage of a honey badger—than which there is no braver animal on earth—but at his chosen work as a hunter it was rather of the keen persistence of a fox-terrier that he reminded me—also he was faithful with a dog's fidelity.

Songoro was a youth—a porter—chosen by Saa to act as a sort of second string to Kazimoto and to carry my spare rifle. Like Kazimoto, he was a born hunter and tracker, with the quickest and keenest eyesight imaginable and an astonishing knowledge of wild animals and

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their ways. It was odd to see how the older and more experienced hunters, Saa and Kazimoto alike, would defer to his opinion whenever there was any uncertainty as to the age or identity of spoor.

Step by step these three pointed out to me upon the ground exactly what had happened.

A single lion—a very big one—had been—there was no indication of more than one—and had dragged the carcase bodily away. The zebra had been lashed firmly by the hind legs to a stake driven deep into the ground. This had been violently uprooted, and had gone with the carcase. There was no sign of struggle. The ground was untrampled. He had merely seized the zebra by the neck, given one great wrench, and the whole thing had come away. The sheer strength needed for such a feat gauges fairly accurately the prodigious powers of an African lion. A big stallion zebra is a heavy beast to move. To pluck from the ground a great stake in addition demands a strength almost cataclysmic.

The smear of the dragged carcase through the wet grass was like a pathway. It led us down a gradual slope towards the dry river-bed, which fed during heavy rains the water where I was camped. About a quarter of a mile along the trail we came in sight of fifteen hyænas quarrelling with a mob of vultures. Amongst them we could see the fragmentary remains of the dead zebra.

Their presence was proof positive that the lion had gone —but not long ago, for all round the carcase his spoor was still visible, and a few yards away Songoro showed me beside a gnawed shoulder-blade the clear imprint of his hocks and haunches. Here he must have been sitting when our approach disturbed him. The slither of his first leap of alarm was scored deep in the mud. If the hyænas and vultures had been by the carcase more than a minute

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they would have obliterated all trace of the lion's spoor. The evidence was conclusive that they had but just begun their feast ; and yet practically the whole zebra had been eaten. This was lion's work. A skilled hunter like Songoro can tell with certainty by mark of teeth alone what beast of prey has been at a carcase. The lion had undoubtedly eaten both haunches, all the meat from the back and ribs and both shoulders ; only the head and neck remained untouched. After such a banquet no lion surely could travel far !

Then began what is to me one of the most fascinating of all forms of hunting—tracking, or ' still-hunting,' as the Americans call it. Its fascination is easier to indulge in than to describe. The perennial popularity of Sherlock Holmes and his imitators suggests that it has an almost universal appeal.

The rain of last night was now a blessing. It made spooring easy. With Saa, Kazimoto and Songoro puzzling out the spoor like hounds upon a hot scent, we went on and on—one of us always keeping a sharp look-out ahead—first down to the dry river-bed and then along it, now on one bank, then on the other, fast or slow as the chances and nature of the ground served.

An hour or more passed thus. Then the spoor petered out among barren rocks not far from the little river's source—a deep ' combe ' filled with a dense tangle of bush. Upon the rock-strewn hillsides of the combe we could find no spoor. There was just a chance the lion had lain up in the combe itself. Saa and the boys drove it out to me. It was a failure. No lion appeared.

' When in doubt cast forward ' is a sound hunting maxim. A wider sweep beyond the farther hill-crest, where there was less rock, cut across several game tracks, all obviously leading to ' Maji Chumvi,' now far behind us.

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On one of these tracks we struck again the spoor of our big lion. This was real luck! There was no doubt it was the same. There was no mistaking those enormous footprints. Eagerly therefore we pressed on. A drizzle of rain started, but nobody cared. We were all too interested and excited by now. So it went on for yet another hour.

At length the spoor led us (it was past nine o'clock by this time) up a long gradual slope of almost open country to a broad-spreading upland of short grass dotted sparsely with squat thorns. For some little time the spoor, obviously of the same lion, had been double—forwards and backwards. Along this very track the lion had come last night. Along it now he was making leisurely his homeward way.

"He very near now," said Saa, keeping a still keener look-out ahead.

Beyond the upland we could see in a shallow valley a line of tall yellow acacias, indicating, as always in Africa, a river-bank. Upon an open flat in front of these trees many zebras and a few Grant's gazelles were feeding, while across the track we were on two silver-backed jackals loped.

Eagerly Saa pointed them out to me. He was positive we were now close to the lion.

"When he see those zebra he lie down near," said Saa, and went on to explain that the jackals, as is their habit, were hanging about in attendance. All this in a whisper.

To me it seemed more probable that the lion would make himself snug for the day in the thick undergrowth of the distant watercourse. A search for him there would, I knew, be arduous, almost hopeless. I could neither imagine a lion after that enormous meal being interested

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in the sight of any zebra nor dream that he would sleep exposed on the bare upland where we were. I had almost convinced myself of this, when Saa touched me on the arm and pointed.

"There he is," he whispered. His eagle eye had spotted just a patch of black mane and a bit of sandy flank beneath a tiny thorn-bush a hundred and fifty yards away. So little was visible that Kazimoto asserted that it was no lion at all but only stones. My glasses, however, revealed an unmistakable lion stretched out and fast asleep.

He was (for me) an impossible shot from where we stood. I slipped quietly out of my macintosh (it was still raining), took the heavy rifle—a .470 double-barrel—and crept as quietly as I knew how towards him, Kazimoto at my elbow with the light rifle—a .318 magazine—in case of need.

We were right out in the open. The stunted and scattered thorn-bushes afforded no real cover. But my object was to get as close as possible to the lion before he woke. On the first shot much depends : if that gets home, so much the less chance is there of trouble after.

We got within a hundred yards ; still the lion slept on. If excitement is what you need, these are the moments which make life worth living. We were within seventy yards of him, when suddenly his sixth sense (I know not what else it can have been) warned him of danger. Up came his great head with its ragged fringe of coal-black mane. Now or never was my chance. We heard the whack of the striking bullet, saw the lion jump and stagger sideways to his feet, and stand broadside on behind a low thorn. My second barrel cut clean through that thorn stem and went singing away into the sky. In a moment Kazimoto had taken the .470 and put the .318

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into my hands. Slowly the lion moved into the open, evidently very sick. A shot from the .318 caught him fair on the shoulder-point. He pitched forward, rolled over and lay still.

Now when a beast falls towards the shot it is almost certain that he is stone dead. With a lion it is best to make sure. He may have one last kick left, and with that kick he can do a lot of harm. We went up cautiously. At close range I put a shot into his withers just between the shoulder-blades. He never moved. We knew then that he was dead.

If this was indeed the lion of which the Somalis had told us, they had spoken truth after all. He was a magnificent brute, very large, and with a wonderful mane—long, thick, extending far back over his shoulders, and absolutely black. Only once in a lifetime can any hunter hope to get a black-maned lion of such a quality.

No doubt of it, my zebra had furnished him with his last meal. He was distended to his utmost capacity like a gorged puppy. Inside him we found great lumps of meat with the patterned hide adhering.

It was comforting to think that after all I had got him by fair means, in open fight, by daylight, after a long hunt of enthralling interest, when but for the chance of last night's steady and persistent rain I might have shot him miserably like a rat in a trap, and in a darkness which would have hid till morning the splendid prize he was.

THE SECOND DAY.

Africa, for those who love her with a constant heart, keeps many surprises up her sleeve. A whole month passed without a sight of a lion. Then things began to happen.

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On the 22nd of June we were trekking along the 'Ngare Marra, the farthest east of the three little southern tributaries of the Guaso Nyiro, two-thirds of the trip finished and our heads now set southwards for Nairobi and home.

A glimpse of a distant lioness began the day's proceedings—a brief and tantalising glimpse only—for though we followed her up industriously we never saw her again. An hour or more later we had completed the dozen miles of my intended march.

Just here two zebra, motionless beneath a tree on the far side of the little river, attracted my attention. I wanted meat for the boys. Patches of low bush below the ubiquitous flat-topped acacias made a stalk easy. Saa and Kazimoto came with me.

Suddenly, without a moment's warning, both zebra galloped away, and Saa, with the lightning quickness of a hunter, spotted the reason in a flash.

" Lions ! "

A lioness was just disappearing into a clump of bush seventy yards away beyond the little stream.

" There are more coming," Saa whispered. " See ! "

After the lioness three half-grown cubs trotted together, followed at a short distance by another obviously of the same litter. Then a full-grown lion, almost maneless, stepped leisurely into view.

I had only the light rifle with me, but no man could resist such a chance.

My bullet caught him in the midriff. He leapt into the air with an indescribable hitch to his quarters, and went down out of sight behind a low thorn-bush.

Yet another lion, a bigger one this, with more mane, dashed out and bounded fast across my front. Another shot stopped him. He whirled round towards us with a

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growl. As he did so a second bullet struck him, and he too sank down out of sight behind another little thorn.

I had now two wounded lions in front of me. I could see neither, and how badly they were wounded I did not know. I was fairly certain of one thing only—neither was mortally hurt.

At this juncture Songoro arrived with my heavy rifle. He had seen what was happening, and had come at full speed. In his haste, however, he omitted to bring with him any ammunition except the two cartridges in the breech of the .470. I sent him back to get some. Meanwhile I smoked a cigarette and waited.

It is often wisest to give a lion time to think over his wounds, provided you can be sure of seeing him if he tries to sneak away. Here the grass was nowhere long enough for a lion to move without being seen : and neither lion stirred. They were waiting for us to make the first move.

Close by stood a tall acacia. When Songoro returned, I sent him up this tree (he could climb like a cat) to try and get a sight of either of the lions from above. Going up to a wounded lion is always a ticklish business. I wanted badly to know if they were alive or dead.

Songoro's eyesight was, I knew, a thing to marvel at. But the way a lion can hide in apparently quite inadequate cover is yet more marvellous. Songoro knew where they were exactly—he could see nothing of them at all.

The position was roughly as follows. The lions were about fifty yards apart, neither of them more than eighty yards from where we stood. Across our front not twenty paces away ran the little river—a mere trickle of water amidst dense and swampy reed-beds. The only possible crossing-place near was immediately in front of us. Here there was a break in the reeds where the little stream

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spread out broad and shallow over an outcrop of rock. Its breadth even here did not exceed three yards, and it was barely ankle-deep.

This spot we found out afterwards was a favourite drinking-place for many kinds of game. No doubt all these lions had been lying in wait for the two zebra to come down to drink.

Now to cross at this open place would bring us within sixty yards of both lions. So close an approach might well provoke a charge from either or both. That we had to chance.

I proposed to take only one boy with me to carry my second gun. The suggestion was kindly meant—there was no need for more than one to run his head into danger—but it almost provoked a mutiny. I realised at once that if I chose one only, the other two might think I distrusted their courage. You cannot hurt a good man's feelings like that.

Once over the little river our problem was easier. Neither lion had stirred. A wide detour to the left brought us to a position still about sixty yards from the first lion, but with the second one now lying about fifty yards or so straight beyond him. I reckoned thus to avoid a flank attack from number two while we were busy with number one. It is an uncanny business manœuvring thus with the full knowledge that two pairs of angry lions' eyes are watching intently your every movement.

Once clear of number two, we advanced straight on the little bush where we knew number one lay hid.

When you are expecting something violent to happen, the jumpiest thing of all is nothing happening. We got closer and closer to that bush, but never a sound nor move did the lion make. Suddenly Songoro spotted him, not fifty feet away—just the tip of one black ear low

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down behind a tuft of grass. A cautious move to the left showed us his head. He was lying flat on his side, his back towards us, to all appearance dead. To make quite sure, Saa lobbed a stone at him. A shot might arouse the other lion to action. The first stone fell short. A second dropped fair on his flank. He never moved. All was well.

We went straight on to number two. Knowing exactly his position was a great asset. We had to watch one place only. We were not thirty yards from him when he jumped to his feet with a fierce rattling growl. A shot from the .470 knocked him over before he could swing into his stride for a charge. The bullet caught him below the right eye, smashed the zygomatic arch —that great projecting bone which supports the powerful muscles of the jaw—and went out at the back of his neck, missing the brain. A lion's brain is small. It presents a target a bare three inches in diameter. Personally I prefer a bigger target than that, especially when the target's owner, should one miss, hits back.

But the blow knocked him senseless. A second barrel at close range finished him.

He was a better lion than the first one, who, except for a tuft of hair between the ears and a scrubby Newgate fringe about the cheeks and chin, was practically maneless. Neither lion was big. I doubt if they were full-grown. They were certainly quite young, for on the flanks and legs of both could still be seen the tawny spots with which a lion cub is born.

While these two lions were being skinned, I pitched camp close by. The sun was hot and high in the heavens, and there was a strong warm wind blowing. After lunch I retired to my tent to lie down during the heat of the day. In the middle of my siesta Saa appeared, urgent and full

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of suppressed excitement. There was a lion on the hill-side behind my tent. The boys were all in little groups talking and pointing when I came out. Two of them, brawny Kavirondos both, had been collecting firewood, when a lion suddenly appeared close to them. They dropped all and fled. The lion followed them, stopping only three hundred yards off when he caught sight of the camp. An unbelievable story for the broad daylight of mid-afternoon! But, to support some at least of their veracity, there the lion indubitably was in full view—a fine old lion, with an abundant and desirable mane. He stood, intent and motionless, right out in the open, staring at the camp, just as a cat will stare at some remote and inaccessible bird.

I think the real reason for his appearance was that he had got wind of the two lion carcases, and had followed it up. The unwonted effort necessary to co-ordinate in his feline intelligence the presence of lions which he could smell with the presence of human beings whom he could see, had stricken him to immobility.

I doubt if he ever solved the problem. A foolish lion and rash! But it does not become us to speak evil of the dead: . . . he is a hearthrug now.

It would not be difficult to surpass the bag of this particular day, either in actual ' head ' of game shot or in number of different species. It comprised in all but nine head and four species—namely, three lions, all males, four guinea-fowl, one spur-fowl (these were collected for the pot during the morning's march), and one zebra—shot for the boys in the evening. But for sheer quaintness of variety, considering that it was done haphazard, as chance directed or as need arose, not deliberately to make a record, I shall find it hard to beat.

There were rejoicings in camp that night; songs and

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dances about the camp-fire. One of the delights of travel in Africa is the way your boys identify themselves with your successes. They sang again the wild triumphant lion song, Kopera, a Swahili, one of the last survivors of the old caravan porters, leading them with a voice like the tolling of a great bell. There is nothing in the world quite like this song, nothing quite so elemental and magnificent, and so completely indescribable. If you have heard French infantry singing the "Marseillaise" upon the march you can imagine something of its savage and irresistible appeal. You will never hear it in the cramped confines of a concert-room. That is not the place. It belongs inalienably to the desolate and inimitable spaces of Africa beneath no roof but the wide sky with its depth on depth of stars.

THE THIRD DAY.

Sometimes a lion is easier to shoot than he is to pick up. I was to have a good example of this a fortnight later. On the 6th of July I pitched camp at the junction of the Nyamindi and Rupengazi Rivers, south-east of Embu.

Two lions began roaring to each other about three o'clock the next morning. Judging by the sounds, they were getting gradually nearer and nearer to the camp. They went on, with silent intervals, for a long time. Not until the first hint of daylight appeared did their roaring die away into little contented moans and grunts. I was up not long after, and found Saa ready and all agog to be at them. The last sounds had come, as well as we could guess, from the direction of a grove of flat-topped acacias about half a mile away, which fringed the top of a ridge running parallel to and three hundred yards from the Nyamindi River.

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What follows I tell with some reluctance, but 'confession is good for the soul.' We were still less than halfway to the trees when these two lions jumped to their feet in the long grass, grunted ferociously at us, and went bounding away in different directions.

I had no rifle in my hands, only a long stick.

This was arrant carelessness. I never imagined for a moment that they would be so near. The grass was not only high, it was saturated with a heavy dew. I was cold and wet, and full of that early morning feeling, none of which is the smallest excuse. Kazimoto got my rifle to me in no time, but it was too late. Both lions were out of sight below the rise. The hillside dipped sharply towards the river, and all its slope was dead ground.

When next we saw the lions, one, still going in great bounds, was rapidly approaching the dense jungle-growth of the river; the other was just disappearing into the acacia-grove towards which we had been making. This one was the bigger of the two, and carried a heavy mane. I decided to follow him. It was just possible that, now he was separated from his companion, he would not go far.

We searched the low thorn growth beneath the acacias; dropped down beyond them into a sort of donga where the ground was open beneath tall trees; looked for his spoor in the loose sand at the bottom without success; climbed up the opposite bank; followed along the farther ridge parallel to the river for about half a mile, still seeing no sign of him, and we were just about to give it up as a bad job when he bounced up in the long grass thirty yards ahead of us and vanished in a flash.

I was ready this time, but he never gave me a chance.

We raced after him, hoping to catch a glimpse of him farther on. We nearly overran him. He had circled

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back when out of sight in the direction from which he had come, with the idea, maybe, of rejoining his companion. Saa caught sight of him just inside a thorn thicket on the outside verge of the dense bush which grew along the river-banks.

The sound of our approach attracted his attention; he stopped to look back.

He was tail on and none too visible, but it looked the likeliest chance I should get. I took hasty aim with the .470 and fired. We heard the bullet strike, and saw the lion leap forward into the thicket of thorns. I fired the second barrel at a venture. It missed him. He was already out of sight.

We approached that thicket with some caution. When close up we heard a deep groan. The sound seemed to come from some distance off—fifty yards or more—and from the very heart of that entanglement of thorns.

How to get at him was the problem—a real nasty one. The thorns grew thick and ten to twelve feet high, their branches interlacing. The grass beneath was long, growing in big clumps, with spaces of hard bare ground between. We could find no blood spoor or mark of footprints: only the broken branch caused by my second shot.

The absence of blood spoor might indicate an internal injury. I had little doubt the lion was badly hit, probably in the body—no mere limb wound would have fetched that groan. But there was nothing to prove him mortally hurt.

There were a certain number of taller trees among the scrub. Saa climbed several industriously to try and get a sight of the lion . . . in vain. The sound had come from the densest part of the thicket, into which it was impossible to see from above. Peering low down beneath the stems was equally useless—the high grass blocked all view. It

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was quite evident that just so long as that lion chose to lie ' doggo,' he would remain invisible until we were right on top of him. We should have practically to kick him up.

I have already complained about a lion's miraculous faculty for concealment in cover which would barely hide a hare. The cover here would have concealed effectively a somnolent rhinoceros, and the only guidance we had to his whereabouts was a single groan—a most unreliable guide. A lion is notoriously a ventriloquist—we had had experience of that a short half-hour ago.

There was nothing for it but to go ahead. I confess to some hesitation. A lion can spring from absolute immobility into the full speed of furious action with the suddenness and efficiency of a high-explosive shell. Whatever chance there was of forestalling his attack and getting a rifle to bear was handicapped considerably by the close-growing thorns. Going in amongst them after him, supposing he was still alive and uncrippled, was, in fact, without exaggeration, and in the curt parlance of slang, ' asking for it.'

But I wanted that lion. He had diddled me once. I was loath to lose him now. I plead guilty also to a hankering to pick up wounded game—whatever it may be.

Neither Saa nor Kazimoto showed the least hesitation. They were eager to go with me. Songoro was not present. A bad bout of malaria kept him in camp. I missed his eyesight now. I wanted every eye I could muster. Five porters who had accompanied me I sent to the top of the ridge to keep a look-out, should the lion try to creep away beyond. They took up a position quite close to a climbable tree. Then Saa, Kazimoto and I crept with infinite caution in amongst the thorns.

I would not labour the strain and anxiety of the following hour. For myself I can only describe it as agonising.

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We did not have actually to crawl. But most of the time we could not walk upright on account of a maze of thorns. Every step we took opened up new little vistas between the thorn stems. Each new visible patch of ground had to be examined minutely, not only in front but to left and right as well. It was a desperately slow business as far as actual progress was concerned. But on such occasions time and distance are not. Every sense and faculty keyed up to the utmost stretch of attention abolish all consciousness of either.

Each yard we advanced the thorns grew thicker and closer together. The heat was tremendous. Hardly a breath of air penetrated through the thorn branches, but the sun, climbing high in the heavens now, blazed through without a check.

The strain of incessant watchfulness began at length, I think, to tell on all of us. Certainly it did on me. If it affected Saa or Kazimoto at all, they hid it admirably. There was no ' say die ' about them.

After another age of this work, I stopped for a moment to rest. My mouth and tongue were the only dry things about me. I was, in fact, rapidly reaching the end of my tether, and I noted that now upon the faces of Saa and Kazimoto also the sweat stood in great drops.

" If we don't find him soon we shall have to give him up," I whispered to Saa ; " we should have come on him long before now."

I think I have said that Saa was a philosopher. His answer proves it.

" If you go on after you have given up all hope "— Saa's English is good but broken : I translate for the sake of clarity—" it is then that success will come," and almost as he spoke he stretched out his hand for my glasses. He had seen something ahead. He took a long look.

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" I think he is there," he whispered, pointing cautiously to a patch of grass not more than twenty yards ahead of us. It was a tuft of the lion's mane waving in the faint breeze which had attracted his attention. It matched to a shade the colour of the dead grass about it, but it waved differently, with a limp instead of a springy movement. That was enough for Saa's trained eye. With the glasses I too could make it out. Cautiously we moved clear of overhanging branches. We could make out the lion's head now.

" I think he is dead," Saa said. I could hear the relief in his voice. .

The grass still hid the lion's body, but it was just possible to make out that he was lying flat on his side. Saa picked up a small rock. I covered the lion with my rifle. Thump! the rock landed full on the lion's flank. He did not stir. Then Saa turned to me with outstretched hand. " Good luck! " said Saa. Never was there truer word!

Kazimoto raised a shrill yell. The boys came running up, one of them bringing my water-bottle. And, heaven knows, I needed that drink, plain water, lukewarm, and tasting of water-bottle though it was.

Now from the place where we had last seen that lion to the place where we found him lying dead was a bare one hundred yards. I left camp that morning at about 5.30 A.M. We found the two lions less than a quarter of an hour after that. We got up to this one for the second time not more than an hour later. I can safely say that it was before seven o'clock when I fired the shot. It was past nine o'clock when we found him dead. It had taken us, allowing, say, half an hour for preliminary investigation of the position, more than an hour and a half to traverse one hundred yards of bush. Lion-shooting is a ' pastime ' in the exact meaning of that word.

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THE FOURTH DAY.

Now there is little doubt that, if I had been ready when we first found those two lions, we might have got them both. My failure was not bad luck; it was, frankly, bad management. By all the rules, after such bungling, luck should have deserted me. On the contrary, it presented me ten days later with a very similar opportunity.

At about 8 A.M. on 17th July I was sitting on a westward spur of a little double-topped hill called Twoinoini, admiring the view.

Southward I could see the junction of the Tana and Thika [1] rivers where my camp was, all the northern slopes of the Itanga hills, and beyond them the rounded top of Donyo Sabuk still enshrouded in morning mist. Northwards stretched wide undulating plains of open grass land, with rare patches of sparse bush in its lower levels. Beyond I could trace the courses of the Thiba, Nyamindi and Rupengazi rivers by their close jungles of tall timber; farther still, Molinduku, a little hummock of hill, marked the situation of Embu. High over all and infinitely far away the great snow-patterned peak of Kenya stood pale and clear above encircling clouds in the cool light of morning.

The whole of my last ten days' marching, almost as far as Meru, sixty miles or more away, lay before me like a map.

While I was thus engaged, Saa came up to borrow my glasses. Saa has no appreciation of natural beauties. He did not want to admire the view. A note of controlled eagerness in his voice told me there was something up.

[1] Not to be confused with the Thiba mentioned five lines lower down.

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On the first undulation of the plain a herd of kongoni, alert and rigid, every head pointing one way, had attracted his attention.

He searched with the glasses all the ground ahead of them. Looking in the same direction I saw emerge from a slight dip in the ground a long grey body, followed immediately by another.

" There ! do you see them ? " said Saa, handing me the glasses and pointing. " Lions ! two of them ! "

As we watched they sauntered leisurely past the herd of staring kongoni, heading for the open plain, maned lions both.

To follow them at once was chancy. We should lose sight of them the moment we got to the lower levels and be unable to mark which way they went. There was a slightly higher spur of Twoinoini half a mile to the eastwards. In the direction the lions were going they would probably pass not very far from the foot of it.

I gave Saa my glasses, telling him to go as fast as he could to the top of the spur and try to keep the lions in sight. They were not likely to go far at this late hour. Hereabouts, owing to much hunting, lions have become almost completely nocturnal.

Saa could cover the ground at twice my speed. Eleven weeks of marching on rough country had worn my boots as thin as paper. Twoinoini is a heap of piled-up broken rock as jagged as flint. I had to pick my way with some perspicacity to avoid crippling myself for good.

While Saa ran on, we kept a watch on the lions until they disappeared from view over a distant fold in the ground. Saa, from his new coign of vantage, would still be able, I thought, to keep them in sight. We walked across to where he was. We met him returning.

Very shortly after he had reached the top of the ridge,

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he told us, he saw the two lions go through a small patch of bush beyond two tall trees, and lie down in the grass fifty yards or so the other side of it.

Everything was now in our favour. The lions had certainly no suspicion of our presence, and there was little chance of their moving again. We had about two miles to go, and once we were down on plain level we should be completely out of the lions' sight, even if (and this was very unlikely) they were keeping a look-out.

Now no matter what kind of game it is you have got 'marked down' in front of you the approach to it is exciting enough. It is in all shooting the one moment above all others. When the game happens to be lions the excitement increases beyond all computation.

> ". . . the blood more stirs,
> To rouse a lion than to start a hare."

Our advance was easy, necessitating no intricacies of stalking. The wind was steady and dead in our favour. We got to the second of the two tall trees which were our guideposts without mishap. I left here the four porters I had brought out, and went on with only Saa, Kazimoto and Songoro to the little patch of bush beyond which the lions lay. On the left of it there was a big ant-hill of bare red earth. From behind this earthwork we examined the open ground ahead.

Almost immediately I spotted the black tips of a lion's ears just appearing above the long grass about seventy yards away. I am proud of this. For the first time I had seen something before Saa or one of my gun-bearers. As I looked, the lion's ears slowly—almost imperceptibly—sank out of sight. We knew the other lion must be close by, but he remained discreetly hid, perhaps asleep. The

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one we had seen had certainly seen us, and was now ' lying low and saying nuffin.'

I held a whispered consultation with Saa. This time I meant to have both lions. We arranged that Saa should give a low whistle while I stood ready to shoot. I knew to the exact blade of grass where the lion's head lay hid. Any slight noise might suffice to make him show himself again.

It came off beautifully. At Saa's whistle up came his head, and at the same instant I fired. His head jerked back, and he collapsed into the grass again, apparently stone dead.

At the sound of the shot the other lion jumped to his feet not ten yards to the left of his companion and bounded off at full gallop, his tail whirling like a flail.

In the direction he was going the ground rose slightly, and then dipped again towards a nullah three hundred yards distant. We could just see beyond the rise the tops of bushes growing there. I fired the other barrel of the .470 at him and missed—the bullet went right over him—changed to the .318, and just before he disappeared beyond the rising ground a hundred yards away, I got a shot into him somewhere amidships. It was a lucky shot. Except for the line of his back he was almost hidden, and he was going at a great pace.

Saa, when he heard the bullet strike, jumped to the top of the ant-hill to see what happened and mark which way the lion went. The lion spun round rapidly three or four times just like a puppy chasing its tail, trying to get at the place where the bullet stung him, and then, catching sight of Saa, charged straight in.

Saa dropped off the ant-hill to my side.

" He's coming! He's coming! " he said. " Look out! "

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Kazimoto put the .470 reloaded into my hands, and proceeded methodically to put another cartridge into the .318 magazine. Nothing rattles Kazimoto.

For a second or two the lion was invisible, hid by the intervening rise. It seemed an age before he topped it. I heard Kazimoto push home the bolt of the .318. Suddenly the lion bounded into full sight on the ridge top not more than sixty yards off, coming very fast. I had time to notice that he was for a moment puzzled. He expected, I think, to see Saa, who was now crouching out of sight behind the ant-hill at my side. The lion checked his pace perceptibly, and as he did so I fired. The shock of the blow knocked him sideways and clean off his feet, but in an instant he scrambled up into a sitting position. The shot had either broken his back or paralysed his hind quarters—struggle as he might he could not move—and then with the second barrel of the .470 I missed him as he sat.

But Kazimoto had the .318 ready. A shot from it bowled him over, his forepaws fighting the air. Again I fired and hit him, but the only result was to bring him almost to his feet again, his head over his shoulder trying to tear at the wound. Another shot floored him once more, and yet another seemed to finish him. But it is not wise to judge by appearance only. We waited ready. In about half a minute he again struggled almost to his feet, and it was only after two more shots from the heavy rifle that he went down finally defeated.

Even then we could not be sure. Once right down the long grass hid him completely. I sat down on the ant-hill and sent Songoro back to the porters to fetch my water-bottle. Excitement—or funk, if you prefer it ; I will not quarrel over a definition — had given me a raging thirst. Meanwhile Saa and Kazimoto counted empty

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cartridge-cases while I smoked a cigarette and watched them.

I had fired eleven shots in all. Of these only one had been expended on the first lion. Of the remainder two were misses; all the rest, eight in number, had been used to lay the second lion low. That ought to be enough for any lion.

In a few moments Songoro returned with my water-bottle, a broad grin on his face. The porters, he told us, when they heard the battle raging, had discreetly retired up the only available tree—an acacia bristling with thorns—which provided limited accommodation only for four hefty men. Songoro wickedly told them that the lions were not dead yet; so they stayed where they were until the thorns persuaded them to disbelieve him.

After a satisfying drink, we went to see what had happened to the first lion. Saa was convinced he was stone dead, hit either in the head or neck. The grass was long enough to hide him entirely until we were within fifteen yards. He appeared to be lying in a crouching position, not stretched flat.

I did not feel inclined just then for any more risks. I put a bullet into his shoulder. It was superfluous. Saa was right. My first shot had hit him fair between the eyes and smashed his brain-pan to bits.

We then went across to the second lion. There was no doubt about him. The grass all round was trampled and torn up, and he was lying in the middle of a pool of blood with bullet-holes all over him. Truly a gallant beast.

I look back upon this day with particular pleasure. It was a hunt of extraordinary interest crowned with complete success. It made a fitting and satisfactory con-

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clusion to a trip which had been throughout an almost unbroken sequence of good fortune.

Saa summed it up very neatly. The African native has always a happy knack of saying with an enviable economy of words just the right and pleasant thing. Saa, highly intelligent and well educated—in many ways he was one of the most capable men, white or black, whom I have ever met—was a past-master. He did it in two words. After we had made sure that both lions were dead, while we went through the ritual handshake of mutual congratulation proper to the occasion, all Saa said was, "Seven lions!" But he said it in a voice of hushed wonder and of culminating triumph, as of one who, after long diligence, completes, unit by unit, a count of thousands.

Five days later I was in Nairobi, my three-months' journey done. It was, as Gibbon says, "with a sober melancholy" that I bade farewell to Saa and Kazimoto and Songoro. To them, and especially to Saa, my whole success was due. Without them I could have done nothing. They had shared with me all risks; they had stood by me staunchly upon every occasion. Admitting that this was their job, the work for which they were paid and paid well, they had earned, I think, something more than wages. To go up to a wounded lion is a dangerous business: it has always an element of uncertainty; as often as not it is a fight to a finish. The part your native attendant or gun-bearer has to play must be nerve-racking. He has to stand by and look on. He depends for his safety not upon his own initiative, but solely upon the capability of his employer to keep his head and to shoot straight. If his master bungles it—always a possibility—the gun-bearer stands precisely the same chance as his master of being badly mauled. When

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you have found, as I had done in my three faithful companions, men who will face with you such a contingency unflinchingly and time after time (I believe they actually enjoyed it), you can no longer include them in the category 'hireling.' If there is any meaning left in a word too often loosely used and misapplied, they have earned the right to be regarded as friends.

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XI.

A WINTER SHOOT

I.

We passed through the silent village before dawn. Not a light was showing, not a sound was to be heard save the low thunder of the grindstones wielded by a few thrifty housewives thus early busy over the day's chupatties. We followed the dusty rutty cattle-track that led from village to jungle, the stars frosty bright, and the hoar-frost sparkling in the roadside herbage. Leaving the track we passed into scrub jungle, and then through a belt of thicker forest, at the farther edge of which my shikari halted me. Two stags were sparring in the dark not far off, the rattle and clash of antler against antler being clearly audible. Somewhere from the misty dark ahead of us came the low murmur of a river flowing over stones.

We were much too early, and had to await the light.

When that came it struck on something over against us, that loomed dull red in the half-darkness, and seemed to be many thousands of feet above us. This proved to be one of the old red-stone fortresses not uncommon in these parts. It floated for a few minutes, an airy structure, on the mist that rose from the river and little lake that girdled it. With fuller daylight it assumed solidity, came nearer to earth, and sat perched firmly on the

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rocky hill, which was scarped to fit the enceinte of its crenelated walls. Whether those frowning battlements, barrel-shaped bastions, and the triple gates armed with elephant spikes, which bestrode the wide-stepped, steeply ascending causeway, had withstood any or many assaults by men, it was not mine to know. But the place had now fallen to the onslaught of the jungle. This had climbed the gullies, thrust great creepers into the crannies of the solid walls, levered up the huge stones, and now stood closely enranked within them. A true robber-baron's stronghold this. A history it must have possessed, probably a squalid one. But all I knew of it was that during a brief period in 1857-58 it had flickered into joyful life again, had started the old game of tyranny and oppression, and had as speedily flickered out with the re-establishment of the Pax Britannica.

Ram Singh, my shikari, added in a husky undertone a more intimate touch. His father had told him, and had had it from his father, that once a Thakur had held rule here—a very bad man, look you, given to the company of other bad men and women, and to wine. There in that airy-looking pleasaunce, with its blue-tiled roof within the walls and showing above them, he and his kind had passed the long hot days drinking wine and shooting arrows at all who passed. And from here they had stretched a rope right across the lake to the crags on the far side. Over this a favourite tight-rope dancer had essayed to pass. When she was in mid-air Mrs Thakur had cut the rope. Ram Singh added as an afterthought, " There are alligators in the lake. The Thakur threw his wife in also."

" Up there," he continued, still referring to the fort, " was where Pulleechar Sahib pulled the tiger out of an underground passage." But as we had come out for

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game and not for scandal and gossip, I bade Ram Singh pipe down and reserve his tale for a more seemly occasion.

As a matter of fact it was time we were moving campwards.

II.

It is not quite always that big-game shooting in the plains of India has to be carried out during the hottest season of the year. For here we were in late December, the weather delightful, and two kinds of stag, one just out of velvet, and the other still in horn, waiting to be shot. Besides these were bear, and whatever else Fortune might offer.

We were a party of three, to wit—my old shooting companion B., a globe-trotter Y., and myself. Y. was a total stranger to us. We had been asked to ask him, and he had arrived the night previous, slightly dinted by his long drive over a poor road. Rather a solemn bird, this Y.: perhaps a little out of date. I will not say that he meant well. He was not so bad as that; but he was of the conscientious kind, and simply bound to elevate and improve others. Now he was to be only a few months in India, and had his hands full. For to him India was a land composed chiefly of heat, niggers, brandy-pawnee, enlarged livers, idol-worship and a dash or so of hot curry. To elevate all this in so short a time was enough to daunt any one. Our Gamaliel therefore had plenty to be solemn about. We only hoped that as we sat at his feet they would not kick us too hard. And on the whole he let us down very lightly.

I found my two companions at breakfast. They were much more interested in their bacon and eggs than in my red fortress.

Y. was haranguing us on the backwardness of India.

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He was slightly bruised by his drive, on the previous day, of thirty odd miles. As he did not ride, we had done our best to provide a conveyance and relays of ponies to bring him out to our camp. "Speaking quite frankly," he complained, "these roads of yours are calamitous, simply calamitous, and your Government Posting Service is as bad. Why, one pair of ponies jibbed for a quarter of an hour."

The roads were not ours, and the posting arrangements were. We, however, attempted no defence, and hoped he had slept well. "Candidly no," he replied; "I was cold—not enough bedding. I had always thought this climate of yours was hot. It would appear that you have a winter." We confessed to the accuracy of this profound reasoning; and to forestall B. I ordered a servant to remove a couple of blankets from his master's bed and to bestow them on our guest's. B. said nothing, but shortly afterwards, on learning that Y. had brought no rifle, he suggested with great suavity that since I had several weapons he was certain that I would spare my Mauser-Rigby for Y.'s use during the shoot. This was very venomous of B. He knew that that .350 was my favourite.

Y. said that when he left England he had left his sporting weapons in the hands of his maker (I thought at first that he had meant a capital M), who had assured him that such perfect tools were too good for rough Indian shooting, and that he had better borrow. The French have a good word for this, but I am not sure how it is spelt.

After breakfast we started for the day's beating. On reaching the forest we drew for places in the immemorial way, B. holding three grass blades, and each of us drawing a blade. The longest blade took No. 1 place,

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and so on. After a beat each number moved up a place.

Followed by gun-bearers, who also carried light wicker stools, we filed up the rocky path that led uphill through the green twilight of the forest. Each gun dropped out at the place silently indicated by the shikari, selected the best place for seeing, broke off a twig here or leaf there to clear the line of sight, and then sending his gun-bearer away behind him out of view, settled down to a motionless wait. This, by the way, can be better accomplished seated on a stool than on a sharp stone or root, which causes fidgets. No. 2 gun was defiladed by ground from the fire of No. 1, but No. 3, who was not thus protected, stepped forward and waved his handkerchief at No. 2, to make sure that the latter knew where not to fire.

A full hour's silence followed. Then a naked black man grew out of a bush some hundred yards in front of me. Simultaneously others to left and right of him grew out of their surroundings. The beat had arrived, as a beat of this nature should. It had not advanced into view, it had made no sound. One moment the forty men comprising it were not, and the next they were—squatted on the ground, extended at fairly wide intervals, and in good line. This after perhaps a mile in dense cover, over difficult broken ground, without any apparent landmarks. It all seems simple enough, but try it with untrained beaters. Sometimes they will split into two packs; sometimes they will miss the guns entirely and go off into the blue. Go with the beat yourself, follow close behind it, and see how easily you will lose it, as it passes silently forward. In a moment every man has melted from sight, swallowed up in the forest. There is not a sound to take you back to it. It is like losing men in a fog. Those who fought in Bernafay or Trône Woods

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while they were yet woods will realise the difficulty of direction keeping, and may recollect the natural tendency of men in woods to move towards daylight, which is always thought to be the border of the wood they are aiming for, but which so often proves to be quite otherwise.

It is rare that there is nothing in a beat. Usually there is some approaching sound to cause the ears to prick—pea-fowl, pig, monkeys, or hinds. Any one of these can make exactly the same sound as the heaviest tiger or the finest stag. But our first beat that day was absolutely blank. It had scarcely ended when the shikari at the farther end of the line of guns gathered us silently in, and leaving the beaters, fetched a detour, and took up a fresh line. No. 2 beat was to begin where No. 1 had ended. Hence the need of absolute silence.

The new beat has begun. No message has been sent to tell the line to move. How has it known just when to start? If you put the question later to the man in charge, he would look puzzled. He would not refer to a watch, because he would have no watch-pocket, much less a watch; and he never reckons time by minutes or hours, but by sun-height; nor by weeks or months, but by seasons; nor his own age by years, but by his teeth falling out or his hair falling off. He would therefore look puzzled, and if he were of a froward kind he would voice his own thoughts, and ask you in turn how he should not know the exact moment to do a thing that he has done for maybe fifty years and his father before him. It is in fact all a matter of jungle routine, and a break in it, though sometimes most advisable, is not a thing to contemplate lightly.

To the waiting, rather bored, guns comes a thrilling sound, the distant rumble of a heavy stone displaced.

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Then there is another rumble and some splashing of leaves. Flies may now sit on nostrils and not a hand be raised to swat them. Still, a wary old stag would hardly herald his approach so. Out into view walks a hind sambur, incautious as hinds are. Her great bell-shaped ears twitch backward and forward. A calf gambols at her heels, very much at her apron-strings. They pass me so close that I could easily touch them with my rifle. Unsuspicious hinds seem to lose or forget to use their powers of scent. But behind me there comes a short explosive bell and a crash, as hind and calf come on my gun-bearer. He has either been scratching himself or peering about, trying to see what is coming, for even gun-bearers are human.

Heralded by unmannerly scufflings, a low grunting, and a good honest hoggy aroma, a sounder of pig next go by. The beat should now be approaching. Suddenly there comes a tremendous clamour, forty axes ring on forty trees, and then utter silence again. Something has broken back. When the beaters appear we learn that a stag—of immense proportions, of course—broke not back, but out to a flank. He was seen to cross a wide glade and to enter an isolated patch of forest. It being now mid-day, it is reckoned that he will not leave this; and is best left to settle quietly down for a siesta before we attempt him.

It is clearly an opportunity for lunch, and after it we again draw lots as to who shall look up the stag. B. wins it, and goes off to meet with a most extraordinary piece of luck. He entered the isolated patch of jungle and peered about him. Not fifty yards from him he saw an enormous pair of antlers, and then the recumbent stag to which they belonged. He took a pot shot. Animals lying down are unchancy things to fire at. B. missed this

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one clean. But the stag never moved, and B. shot him dead with his next shot. The tape showed forty-two inches, which is a very ultra-good head; and it possessed in addition a massiveness and symmetry which do not often go with great length. I cannot suppose that the stag was such a heavy sleeper as not to have heard the first shot. He must have been lying low and hoping to escape observation.

We resumed operations after this, and had three more beats, in one of which a panther was seen by the beat; in another we shot a four-horned antelope, a little yellow-haired fellow of a very retiring nature; and Y. had a shot at a hyena, which he thought was a young tiger. Both animals have dark stripes on a light background, and in dense shade or in a bad light the mistake is very excusable.

Five beats in one day are as much as any reasonable man can wish for. The long waits do not require any physical exertion, but they are extraordinarily tiring, and often very boring. We were glad of the two-mile walk to camp.

III.

Round the fire after dinner that night I asked B. whether he had ever heard of a tiger being shot in the red fort. He said that there was some yarn about somebody having shot a tiger there once, but he had never heard the details. These forests seldom held tigers. Such as were shot hereabouts were non-residential, and merely passing through to other more favourite haunts farther north. So we sent for Ram Singh the shikari, and bade him disclose his tale. He squatted down by the fire and soon showed that when broadcasting comes to India, he would earn a competence by telling short tiger stories

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and sending Indian children thoroughly frightened to bed.

This Pulleechar Sahib began life by being very keen on panthers. His bungalow was just thirty miles distant from his favourite panther-ground, which was near the group of villages of which Narrator's was one. From here, whenever a panther killed, Ram Singh doubled all the way to Pulleechar's bungalow, and then Pulleechar doubled all the way out with intent to shoot the panther. In this, however, he was not always successful, for to do sixty miles takes time, and promptitude is the essence of success in these matters.

Pulleechar then bethought him of a plan. He had several white sheets sown together and gave them to Ram Singh, and bade him when a panther killed to display them on the almost perpendicular side of a hill near Ram Singh's village, and facing in the direction of Pulleechar's bungalow. This, said Ram Singh, was a puckha bandabast, and saved him much exertion, and kept Pulleechar busy. But when we asked what was the tale of panthers thereby achieved, his story lacked incident and outline, and we judged that the white-sheet scheme had not produced much. At any rate, we drifted from panther to tiger and from the hill near Ram Singh's village to the red fort some miles farther away. In one of the gullies that cleft the sides of the hill on which the fort stood, Pulleechar beat for, shot and wounded a tiger. The tiger went up the gully and entered the fort through a gap in the walls. The two, hunter and shikari, tracked the tiger up the gully, through the dense jungle that now grew within the fort, and found that he had gone to earth down a large drain or underground passage. Some way along the line of this drain there was a hole which gave through the roof of the drain. Pulleechar,

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who must have been of an enterprising nature, poked his head down into this hole and found that the tiger lay somewhere below him, but out of sight. Whether dead or alive, he now proceeded to find out by taking Ram Singh's turban, tying a stone to one end of it, and using it as a deep-sea lead. He was busy making casts without much result, when a swarm of bees descended on them and drove them, the worse for wear, off the hill. They retired to camp, removed their stings, and, armed with a rope and an electric torch, returned to the scene of action in the afternoon. Operations were resumed. Information obtained was negative. Pulleechar said, " He is dead, and he makes no answer now." " Perhaps he's not there," said Ram Singh. " He *is* there," said Pulleechar ; " I can smell him." " Perhaps," replied Ram Singh, " he has gone off himself and left his smell." The tracks, however, showed only the ingoing of the tiger. There was some further debate, and then Pulleechar said that the only way to find out was to go in and see. Ram Singh begged him not to. For let alone the danger from the tiger, he said, there was the danger from snakes ; and let alone the danger from snakes, there was the danger from *the* snake—the long black one, very holy, with hair " that long " growing on its head—to whom pious women from the village below brought milk daily in a bowl. But Pulleechar scoffed at snakes. Taking his torch and rifle, and tying the rope round his waist, he crawled in. Ram Singh climbed a tree to await developments. From his perch he may or may not have cried aloud in a lamentable voice like King Darius to Daniel. I do not think the Bible story could possibly be improved on. But Ram Singh's might have. There was no scuffling or roaring, no hissing of serpents, no smothered rifle-shots, but only the appearance of the

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rope-soled boots of Pulleechar, and presently the rest of him with a taut line. The tiger was shortly after dragged out, noosed by his hind legs, and quite dead. "And it was a very snaky place?" we asked. "Not that I know of," said Ram Singh. "And the sacred snake with hair on its head, what about that?" "Oh," said Ram Singh, with a porky smile, "that also was a lie."

We naturally expected to hear more about the determined sportsman, but he seems to have disappeared into the fog of the Great War and never to have reappeared again. For on our asking Ram Singh for more about him, he said that for four years no sahib had visited his jungles. On making diligent inquiry into the cause of this, he had learnt that the Sirkar was at war with a country called Russia; that nearly all the sahibs had had to go across the seas; and that some of them had been killed; and that as Pulleechar had never turned up again, he presumed that the Russ-log had slain him.

Such was Ram Singh's version of the Great War, and he probably knew more about it than a great majority of his countrymen.

IV.

Hospitality demanded that the second day's beating should produce something for our guest. This was managed without much difficulty. There was an old and very leery stag in the first beat. He came to me without a sound, and long before I had seen the white tips of his antlers (he showed me nothing more but these and his feet) he had had a good scrutiny of me. He then drifted up the line of guns. The ground was a foot deep in leaves, and beneath them were loose boulders. As he passed away from me towards Y., the next gun, I could watch him lifting each leg and pointing each foot, and

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then setting it down so as to pierce without rustling the leaves. He gave Y. the go-by, and was not seen by him. He had a stealthy look at B., who saw him, but not to shoot. He drifted off to a stop placed by B., and turned and came back. He seems to have made up his mind that B. was harmless, and advanced at last into view. He was still moving forward when B., by a slight intentional movement, diverted him to Y., who with one shot sent him rolling down the steep side of the ravine along which we were posted. He rolled and crashed his way to the bottom, and although he was out of sight now, we could all hear the tremendous bump with which he brought up in the ravine bed. The beat was not quite finished. There might be, and in this case there was, something still to break. He came, a lightly-moving dark-brown shadow, splashing over the leaves in his gallop, suggesting something made of velvet, rubber and steel springs, supple as a snake, nearly as wicked-looking —a large male panther. A single shot was fired at him, and he simply vanished. He might have been lying stone-dead in the leaves or making back wounded towards the beaters. The shot was immediately followed by a long shrill blast on a whistle. That was the danger-signal, and we knew that on hearing it every beater would shin up the nearest tree. Investigation by two guns, however, showed that all was well—the panther lay dead. The beaters were called to earth, and we stumbled down to look at the stag. He was just alive, and before a finishing shot was put into him, a beater laid his hand on the antlers. Immediately there was a great uproar. What was it all about ? Why, just this. Our beaters consisted of two castes—of Ghonds, aristocrats and lords of the soil, and of Chumars or untouchables, who were men-of-all-work in the Ghond villages. It was a Chumar

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who laid hand on the antler of an undoubtedly live stag. Being alive, his touch caused no defilement. But the Ghonds, intent on asserting their social superiority, insisted that it was dead, and being dead, the touch rendered forty stone of venison uneatable for all but the Chumars. The cause of the trouble stood humbly by. "Subtle dog," you will say, "of course he did it on purpose in order to get the whole of the venison for his pals." But this was hardly likely. If a high-caste man is ready to assert his superiority over a low-caste man, the latter is as ready to acknowledge and observe the great gulf that lies between them. No Chumar would dare to do such a thing as we had witnessed. He is, or was when I witnessed the foregoing, still in that state of life when his daily prayer or its equivalent was—

> "God bless the squire and his relations,
> And teach us all our proper stations."

Such is India, or such it was recently.

Meanwhile B. was busy with his tape, and pronounced a measurement of forty inches, which was good. He maintained a perfect gravity when Y., always ready to elevate and improve, delivered a short homily on the evils of not keeping still, "For," said he in conclusion, "speaking plainly, that careless movement of yours clearly lost you the stag and sent him to me."

"I shall be more careful in future," replied B., "it was a most foolish movement. However, my loss your gain, and I think you are the owner of a very presentable head."

Half a dozen Chumars had removed their axe-heads from the helves, and were stropping them eagerly on

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stones. To prevent them cutting off the stag's head close up by the ears, as they love to do, B., with his hunting-knife, cut a line all round the base of the neck and bade the butchers decapitate at that point and at no other. We left them at their horrible work and moved off to examine the panther. He was a large male in beautiful winter coat, marked with jet black rosettes, as if with five fingers bunched up, dipped in soot, and then pressed on the yellow skin. His whiskers, every hair of them, were counted. They have a habit of disappearing during the journey from forest to camp. He was measured correctly between uprights, tip of nose to tip of tail, in a straight line. The tale of goats and dogs to his credit was a lengthy one.

There were at first some faint hopes, which on closer examination proved to be without foundation, that he might have been a man-killing panther which had been at large in the neighbourhood for the past several years. A large Government reward for him was on offer. But panthers are very evasive, and moreover this one's hobby was to remove old ladies asleep on the roofs of their houses. The reward had not been won. The man-killer had been wounded, was lame, and bore other easily-recognisable marks about him.

In a late afternoon beat the largest and greyest boar I have ever seen made his appearance. Disturbed by something, he came rampaging down the line of guns, passing so close to Y. that he put his foot through Y.'s hat, which was lying on the ground beside him. This kind of boar is never seen by pig-stickers; for, although he may send his progeny to colonise lighter jungles, where they can be beaten out and ridden, he never leaves heavy forest himself.

We had had five beats, and most unwillingly we turned

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to our sixth, for to have omitted it would have affected our next day's operations. I think we were all very inattentive. I at least was nodding on my stool. Waking up, I looked towards Y., who sat about a hundred yards off and in view of me. He too was nodding. Standing and looking intently at him, plainly visible to me, but not so visible to him (had he been awake), was a panther. I did not care to shoot, for I might have brought a wounded panther on to a man asleep. So I watched. Y.'s head kept bobbing forward, but the panther never stirred. He remained so still that I almost began to think that I had mistaken a bush or a fallen branch for a panther. The scene must have lasted five minutes. Then the panther made a face and vanished. But the laugh was not entirely on Y. There was a ten-minute pause, and then the panther burst from covert just in front of me, and his rush past me was so sudden and so unexpected that I had not time even for a snap shot. I think that after leaving Y. he must have come and had a good look at a certain mug, and, having made up his mind that he was about the most perfect specimen of a mug ever seen, he had resolved to give him a lesson.

After that long day's sitting we were glad to clear the forest and take our way campwards in the gloaming. Here were tiny fields of green crops protected by gigantic thorn hedges. A country cart came groaning along on its solid nearly elliptical wheels. Y. stabbed our dead hearts broad awake to the picturesqueness of it, and especially to the bullocks' horns. These were painted one red and the other green. He wondered at our deadness. He was not comforted when we explained to him that these things, after fifteen years of them, fail to evoke the first fine careless raptures; and that after twenty

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years you begin almost to think an English waggon on nice round wheels, with spokes all blue and scarlet, is better than anything India can show—and that bullocks' horns are better plain than coloured.

V.

Two of our party were to breakfast at 4.30 A.M. next day and try for cheetul (*Cervus axis*) some miles off in another direction. We had taken our toll of sambur stag out of the forest-block which we had beaten during the first two days. Two stag was the limit of our shooting permit. In the new block only stalking was allowed. No one would wish to beat where stalking was possible.

Ram Singh was positive that only the evening stalk in this jungle would be productive of anything. I therefore with great magnanimity stood down from the morning venture, lay in bed till 8 o'clock, and spent a pleasant forenoon pottering with Bingo and a scatter-gun in the fields and scrub about camp. It was, of course, absurd allowing Bingo to accompany us to camp, but he would not hear of being left behind. For in camp he was between the devil and the deep sea, and had to be kept continually on the chain. If left a free dog he would be nosing about the edge of the forest and in danger of panther, or paddling about the margin of the river that ran close to our tents and in still greater danger of alligator.

Our party met at lunch, the early risers having had no luck. Ram Singh and I went out in the afternoon. It was an open forest, full of pleasant glades and green sward. A river flowed through the midst of it. The scent of the Korinda bushes filled the air. An ideal place for cheetul. Ram Singh was particularly optimistic, for a year previous he and one called Harss Sahib had been

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after cheetul here and had come on a tiger on the top of one. Harss Sahib had shot the tiger and presented his henchman with a bicycle. Had my luck been in, I supposed that the least I could present was a sewing-machine. But we saw nothing but a peacock in full plumage, tail spread, dancing a stately minuet to his sombre hens in a green glade. The rays of the setting sun shone on them for half a minute, and then they were aware of human spectators and scuttled off. Idylls such as these are tucked away in something better and safer than game books, for thieves have long ago broken through and stolen mine, or white ants have corrupted it.

Y. had been sent out after black buck. I had believed that rifle of mine which B. had so generously lent him to be of a particularly deadly accuracy. But Y. had not found it so, and recommended me (not 'candidly' this time, but 'as a friend') to send it to his maker to be resighted.

VI.

Next day we shifted camp and moved to a bear jungle. Our first camp had been where forest marched with cultivation. Stag billeted in the former and rationed on the latter. But the Sloth-bear, or *Melursus ursinus*, likes forest fruits and insects, and a cave to live in and try to keep cool in. So our new camp was in cliffy jungle which abounded in caves.

I do not know why *Melursus ursinus* is called Sloth-bear. He may be a little short of sight owing to hair coming over his eyes, and he may be a little lumpish in movement, but he is quite the most uproarious denizen of the forest, and the most subject to nerve-storms. He is more dreaded by jungle folk than any other beast, and with good reason. He can trundle himself along on his

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inturned feet to some purpose, and can climb a tree with the best. His manners are vile, his morals worse, and his temper worst of all.

While waiting for our tents to go up in the new camp, B. and Y. pottered down a wide sandy river-bed. The forest grew right up to each bank. They heard a great uproar on one bank—deep throaty coughs and sharp yappings. Thinking it was only a troop of monkeys, they were strolling on, when suddenly a panther broke across the river-bed, and after him in full cry a pack of wild dogs. The forest on the opposite bank swallowed them up, and the sounds of the hunt died away. I imagine that that panther's number was up sooner or later, for a pack of wild dogs is relentless, and they would follow him, or sit and wait for him under a tree, till they got him at long last. They are said to hunt and kill tiger, though the chase is a long one and the line of it strewn with their dead. The jungle people call them golden dogs. They are of a deep rufous colour, with bushy tails, and kill more game than any other animal. Government pays a small reward to help to exterminate them. Attempts have been made to poison them with strychnine, but the doses were too large. Red dog was a little sick, and none the worse. They are a great nuisance, and if many are about, you may as well move elsewhere, for the game will already have done so.

I was out very early next morning for a prowl round before breakfast. It was still quite dark when I was passing a tree from which unusual sounds came. There were three bears in it. Aware of my presence, they came scrabbling and flopping down in rapid succession. It was so pitch dark under the tree, and the bears were so pitch black, that although I knew they were passing close to me, I could not make out the faintest outline of

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a bear. Their boo-hoos were doubled and trebled when I let off my rifle at an extra solid bit of blackness. I was sorry I had fired, for I felt that I had wounded one. The babel, rising at times to screams, was audible for a full ten minutes before it died away in the distance. I waited here till daylight, and regretted to find a blood-track. This I followed into a maze of huge boulders that had fallen from a cliff, and there I lost it. On my way back to camp there were signs enough of bear, great holes that they had dug in the hardest kind of ground, in order to get at termites or other insects. The bear's fore-claws are veritable spades, and having dug down to the ants, he inserts that hideous bare snout of his, which is like a section of canvas fire-hose, and snuffles up his prey in a manner audible from a longish way off.

I got back to camp in time for a hurried meal ere we started for the beat. We took machans with us that day, light triangular wooden structures with a ring-bolt at each angle, readily lashed up into any shape of tree and used to shoot from. We, however, only used them in beats where it was impossible to see well when standing on the ground.

This day produced one bear killed, three missed, and an incident which might have been tragic, but was laughable. A bear in one of the early beats came to Y. He shot her truly and well, and then watched a bit of her back detach itself and trundle off into covert. This was a baby bear carried on mother's back, and clinging so close and tight in the deep fur as to look like part of it. Incidentally Y.'s bullet, fired at a fairly steep angle downward from his machan, after passing through the bear, ricochetted from the ground and passed close over the head of the occupant of the next machan. This is not the laughable incident referred to a few lines back,

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for nothing of that nature can ever be treated as a joke. Y. was only blameworthy to this extent, that bear and occupant of the next machan were in the same vertical plane. Theoretically the shot ought not to have been fired, but very few would have refrained from firing it. The sloth-bear's fur is so coarse that the skin is hardly worth keeping. There is a curious bone, however, which the bear keeps in a very boneless part of his anatomy, and this at some inconvenience can be used as a pen-holder.

A little later I missed handsomely a mass of black hair travelling at the rate of knots through long grass, and just visible over the top of it. Had I been up in a machan I should have seen it better.

For the last beat of the day the guns were a little late in getting to their places. There was only time to hurry out the stops and to tell them to get up their trees into safety but not to see that they did so. One of them remained on the ground, and probably relapsed into slumber. I had barely got to my station when I saw two bears coming towards me. I moved a foot or two to get a clearer view. The bears must have spotted me, for redoubling the hideous uproar they were already making, they turned sharp off to their right and rushed away, disappearing in the direction of the place where I had placed the stop aforementioned. After a very short interval human cries were added to the bearish noises. Lamentable cries they were, inviting the very earliest succour. I ran with a heavy rifle for all I was worth a distance of some three hundred yards, and arrived just in time to see two bears scramble down from a tree and make off. To the furthest tip of the longest branch of the same tree clung the stop, and all parties concerned in this *coup-d'œil* were yelling. I loosed off a barrel at

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each bear, missed them both (I was rather out of breath), and the scene ended.

The stop later told me what had happened. On seeing two bears almost on top of him (he must have been very sound asleep not to have heard them coming) he had climbed his tree. To his dismay both bears followed him. He had retreated along his branch, and the leading bear had followed. Arrived at the end of all things he was about to drop to the ground, when the bears changed their minds and went off. He showed me the claw-marks on the branch he was astride of, and they were unpleasantly near his naked thigh.

We were back in camp early that day, for we were determined that Y. should gratify his oft-expressed desire to sit up all night in a tree over a young buffalo. He had read of the charms of a long night vigil—of the many sights and sounds he would enjoy, of the roaring of tigers, of their stealthy approach, of the shattering of the midnight silence by the rifle-shot of the keen-eyed watcher, and of his triumphant return to camp. Alas! the roarings are too often those of mosquitos; and if anything comes to the kill, it is too dark to see the sights. A random shot may be fired at the scrunching sounds; and the result, if there is one, is as often as not a hyena.

We sent Y. off at 4 P.M. in company of a young buffalo wearing a large wooden bell. With this we hoped a panther, long resident in these parts, might be rung up to an evening meal. But our hopes were not so high as those of Y. He took with him a bottle of highly-scented stuff warranted to keep off mosquitos, and with this he anointed hands and face.

He returned at 10 P.M., remarking dryly that his mosquito mixture had kept off the tigers but not the mosquitos. This was Y.'s first lapse from the serious. Thus

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to fire off a joke into the buxom air was a sign of improvement. But he had forgotten his poor little buffalo, and we sent him back to see that it was brought into safety.

VII.

Our last day's hunting was quite upset by a tiger.

We had counted on adding at least one more bear to the bag, and were about to beat a bit of forest certain to hold bear, when a messenger arrived reporting that a tiger had killed at his village three miles distant. We were very sceptical, for as before mentioned tigers were very rare hereabouts. But the messenger refused to be cross-examined out of his tiger and into a panther. He had seen the former with his own eyes that morning strike down a full-grown buffalo out of the village herd. He stoutly maintained that the buffalo was a full-grown one, not a calf. No panther would attempt a large buffalo. Nothing could shake him in fifteen minutes' close questioning. Unwillingly we were forced to decide that not to act on this information would be flying in the face of Providence. So we broke off operations and walked the three miles, which proved to be nearer five, and arrived only in time to fix up a very hasty beat if we were to get it through in daylight. No tiger appeared —we doubted if there ever had been one—but a good stag came and stood for five minutes, early in the beat, under my tree. There was to be no shooting of course at anything but tiger.

We returned to the village along a wide dusty cattle-track. The fifty beaters who preceded us could scarcely have left a square inch of the track untrodden. Yet none of them saw and none of them trod on a little dusty thing that lay in the middle of the track. It was we,

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following just behind, who noticed it, and killed it—a karait—one of the most deadly snakes.

We flattered ourselves that under our tactful tuition the cleft in Y.'s hoof had sensibly abated when we parted with him. He no longer alluded to beaters as Nig-wigs, nor addressed them in broken or baby English. "This India of yours" was almost dropped. He had discovered that the best people no longer drank brandy-pawnee nor grew livers, and in these respects at least required no elevating. Whether we had dragged him down to our level or he had raised us to his is a matter for debate.

When we were saying good-bye to him, we asked him at what hotel he was going to stay at Bombay. "At none," he said; "I am staying with the Governor." "A friend of yours?" I hazarded. "No," he replied; "these people are paid for that sort of thing." With this final shrewd flick of the cloven hoof he departed.

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XII.

THE BURRAH BÂDMASH BAGH.

We had discussed him at tiffin. Indeed he was at that time the Topic of the District—the 'man-eating' leopard who had lately taken to levying toll on the goats, and even the children, in the coolie lines. His exploits had no doubt been magnified—native rumour having that tendency; but the leopard had anyhow done enough effectually to put the wind up the whole countryside—even causing a certain number of desertions; and it had become desirable that he should be removed.

Now your ordinary, so to say peace-loving, leopard is a sufficiently subtle customer; more than most jungle people, he has to live by his wits. But when, handicapped by age, loss of teeth, or a partially-disabling wound, he is forced to abandon jungle-hunting and take to preying on Man, his wit would appear to become sharpened with the increasingly difficult problem of existence. Wherefore, while Hassett, our freshly-arrived M.O.—young and Irish!—was keen on immediate action—"hunting the beggar down" and that sort of talk—my Assistant and I—comparatively old stagers—realised but too well the nature of the task and to what extent success must depend on Luck. And at this very moment Fortune happened to smile.

We had reached the coffee and cheroot stage and were sitting in long chairs facing the blank hot hours till tea-

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time, when the bungalow chowkedar came in to say that Tookroo, the Headman of one of the lower lines, had come up to report that the *burrah bâdmash bagh* had entered his lines at noon, had struck down a child, and, on the hue-and-cry being raised, had taken refuge in a hut used as a grain go-down, and was even then lying up under the *machan*—the bamboo platform on which the grain is stacked.

I was inclined to be sceptical. My knowledge of the ways of leopards told me that it was most unlikely that the beast would have entered a house in broad daylight, and much more probable that, when the alarm was given, he had slipped back to the jungle unperceived. Tookroo, however, was not to be shaken; the *bagh*, he said, was in the hut; and he begged so earnestly that I "and the other sahibs" would go down and shoot him, and showed such a touching faith in our power to do so, that eventually we ordered the ponies and got out our guns. I took my double-barrelled 4.50; I think the doctor had a sporting Mannlicher; and my Assistant's weapon was a shot-gun in which bullets could be used. As, however, I intended to place him in charge of the beaters, I advised him to take buckshot.

The tea-garden, I must here explain, occupied a tongue of land some four miles long by 500 yards wide running down into the plain from the very feet of the Himalayas, which rose, richly forested and snow-peaked, to some 9000 feet immediately behind us—a truly superb background of which one never tired. The 'Garden' was flanked on either side by a deep *Khud*—alternately a roaring, ravening torrent or—as now, at the end of the rains—a dried-up, boulder-strewn river-bed with a trickle of water down the centre. The lines we were bound for occupied the extreme end of the tongue.

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Escorted by Tookroo and with the syces trotting behind we rode down the brown sun-baked road between the green pattern of little tea-bushes. The doctor, entirely new to shikar, was in a state of such excitement that I had serious misgivings as to what he might or might not shoot! My Assistant, three years out, took things more calmly. And as for myself, I was much inclined to think that the whole thing would turn out a 'frost.' As I have said, it was not probable that either tiger or leopard (alike *bagh*), disturbed at noonday amongst houses, would run into a house. He would as soon run open-eyed into a trap. No; the leopard was safely back in the jungle, and we should have a hot ride for our pains.

On reaching the lines, however, it was immediately evident that Sieur Léopard was believed to be 'At Home': men and women chattering vociferously—many of them on the roofs of the huts—allowed of no doubt on that point. I therefore proceeded to make the necessary dispositions.

When Tookroo pointed out the 'go-down' I found it was the hut that lay nearest to a little *subdjee barri*, or vegetable garden, which occupied the extreme tip of the tongue of land. The vegetables had mostly been gathered or had run to seed, and, with the rains, the jungle had almost resumed possession. For my own post I therefore chose a hut the roof of which commanded both the back and front of the go-down, the entrance to the *subdjee barri*, and the open space between—some thirty yards. A little tree near the garden gate seemed an appropriate perch for the doctor. My Assistant I appointed O.C. Beaters—some thirty or forty coolies armed with lathees, dhows, and—most important of all—empty kerosene-oil tins. A few aboriginal Santhals, armed with bows and arrows, accompanied them.

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This little force I instructed to close in on the go-down from behind in a semi-circle, making as much noise as possible, the idea being that if the leopard were still in the go-down he would bolt across to the vegetable garden, giving the doctor and me a shot on the way.

Now, in the ordinary course the native is a noisy animal: he loves noise, his nerves not seeming to be so sensitive or his tympanum so tender as those of his anguished sahib. But when actually *ordered* to make a noise, *paid* for it, and moreover provided with the implements to make it! Suffice it to say that for full five minutes pandemonium reigned. And the result was precisely—*nil*.

I was now positive that the leopard was not—*could* not be—in the go-down. No wild animal yet littered could have stood such an infernal din advancing on him, and lain still. I accordingly shouted this across to Tookroo—now Second in Command of the Beaters. But he remained unconvinced, and obstinately repeated his argument: the leopard had been seen to enter; the exit had been constantly watched; he had not been seen to come out; *ergo*, he must still be inside.

To solve the point two Santhals—far more enterprising than the other plains-bred coolies—now volunteered to climb to the roof of the go-down, tear out some thatch and see if they could disturb him by jabbing down through the hole with a long pole.

No sooner said than done. They scaled the roof like cats, and, sitting astride, were soon working a long bamboo with hopeful energy. For a minute or two there was no reply to my inquiries, and then one of them yelled back triumphantly, "I can *feel* him, sahib! I can *feel* him!"

The words were scarcely out of his mouth when there was a sort of roaring snarl, and a yellow streak shot up

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through the hole—exactly like a tongue of flame—and disappeared again. It happened so quickly that all I actually *saw* was the two sportsmen rolling down the roof as the yellow streak vanished, but I found later that the leopard had shot up, and, *while in the air before dropping back again*, had struck each man a buffet. Both were severely mauled—the one in the shoulder, the other in the face—and took a long time to recover. Apart from the lightning speed of the strokes this feat of the leopard appears to me very wonderful: a perpendicular spring straight up through a smallish hole at a height of at least seven feet from the machan. But the facts are as stated.

Before I had time to breathe again—almost simultaneously, in fact—the yellow streak flashed across the space into the *subdjee barri*. I fired mechanically just as it was disappearing, but with no confidence in the shot. The doctor, taken entirely by surprise, did not even raise his gun.

Ensued pandemonium, confusion, shouts, chatter—a fever of excitement. The doctor, carried away by it, shinned down his tree and joined the vociferating mob. I shouted to them, whatever they did, to keep clear of the *subdjee barri*, as there is nothing on earth so really dangerous as a possibly wounded leopard. When things had quietened a little I too climbed down and we all went to examine the garden entrance. Here we found blood.

The doctor was for following up the track *instanter*—into the tangled *subdjee barri;* but I earnestly protested. I again tried to impress on him that a wounded leopard is far fiercer and more deadly than a wounded tiger; and that to go into the garden without having first located the beast would be stark staring madness. But I had all my work cut out to dissuade him.

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Fortunately, at this juncture a diversion occurred. I have said that the *Khud* ran along the tea-garden. Therefore it ran along and below the *subdjee barri*. A crowd of natives from lines on the far side of the *Khud* had been excited spectators of our doings, and their Headman now came running across, shouting as he came that he had seen the leopard. When he reached us, breathless, he described how he and his people had watched the *bagh* come through the vegetable garden and down into the *Khud*. Then, turning to the left, it had run into a little patch of jungle in the river-bed. He pointed out the patch. It was indeed tiny—an islet of rough jungle grass with a small cluster of bushes. One would hardly have believed that a full-grown leopard could be concealed by it.

The Sirdar—a very quiet reliable man—was, however, positive, and after questioning him closely I felt sure that he had seen what he described, and that the leopard must be in the patch. I therefore now entered the *subdjee barri*, together with the doctor, Tookroo and half a dozen Sirdars, and passed through to the edge of the *Khud*, whence I could command the patch and get a shot whether the leopard bolted up or down the *Khud*. My idea was to rout him out by firing a couple of shots into his refuge.

I must not forget to mention that just after the go-down incident my old *dâk-wallah*, returning to the bungalow with the mail, had scented the battle from afar and had come up to join in the fun. He was the Head Sirdar of the Nepaulese, and a most faithful old fellow. Noticing that in scrambling down from the roof I had lost my solar topee, he brought it me. I thanked him, but said that as the sun was nearly down I would not bother about it. " Better put it on, sahib," he gently insisted ;

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and to satisfy him, I did so—chin-strap at the back. Little did I think what I should owe him for his thoughtfulness.

Well, the plan of attack being clear, I raised my rifle to fire into the patch. What followed happened almost quicker than thought. As the rifle touched my shoulder I heard a snarl behind me, a native near by shrieked "*Bagh!*" and, swinging round, I had just time to press the trigger at a yellow mass in the air, almost on top of me. As I fired the gun was torn from my hands and I was knocked over backwards. All I remember *feeling* was the fur of the brute's stomach brushing across my face.

I rolled over on my side and, as I did so, heard another report. This, as it turned out, was the doctor firing at the leopard broadside-on as he landed from his spring. We subsequently found that this bullet had passed clean through, about an inch above the heart. But it had no immediate effect upon the leopard, for, as I lay, I had a vision of him, practically on his hind-legs, amongst the five Sirdars, clouting right and left.

Next—a bit dazed, of course—I sat up; and, suddenly realising what had happened, got up and ran for my gun —some ten yards off. When I had slipped in a fresh cartridge I ran through the *subdjee barri* into the lines, where I found a very natural preference prevailing for elevated positions.

Then the doctor and Tookroo appeared. In answer to my questions—"Is the *bagh* dead? Where's he gone? Does anyone know?"—Tookroo pointed to a Santhal perched in a small tree in the *subdjee barri*, who, between shouts and gesticulations, was keeping up a steady fire with bow and arrow at some object below him.

This, he said, was the 'tiger,' lying behind a rock,

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dying. Dying or not, however, the man distinctly refused to descend from his tree, and I, feeling a bit shaken, did *not* feel inclined to go and see how dead the leopard really was.

Just then, however, a party of tea-planters from a neighbouring 'garden' arrived. Roused by the noise, they had watched the scene through field-glasses, and when they saw me knocked down by the leopard had galloped over. To one of these—a noted Shikaree—I now explained the situation, and he proceeded to put in a safety shot.

But the leopard was really dead. The *post-mortem* showed that my first shot had merely grazed his rump, inflicting a flesh wound; but my snap shot as he sprang had luckily struck him full in the chest and had absolutely raked him fore and aft; while the doctor's shot, piercing him through and through just above the heart, had also been a mortal wound.

But in spite of this the beast had had sufficient vitality for his last fight, and had seriously wounded three out of the five Sirdars—one of them so severely that he died. Thus, including the two Santhals, there were five wounded men, and the 'Doctor Baboo' and Hassett were for some time busy patching them up.

And now, it may be asked, what did I owe to the *dâk-wallah?* My topee had, of course, been knocked off when the leopard bore me earthwards, and when the excitement had calmed down and it was picked up there could be no doubt that the hat had saved my head. Each side of the crown was torn with five claw-marks; and the crown itself, crunched in, bore four equally distinct fang-bites, clean puncturing the tough canvas. With my head bent down above the rifle I had been shielded by

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the topee, and the leopard, missing his favourite spring for the throat, had swept off my hat between his fore-paws.

Little by little the whole episode was reconstructed. My shikaree found that the leopard *had*, as reported, gone down into the *Khud* and into the patch. But he also found that the brute had doubled back, stealing unnoticed through some grass at the side of the *Khud*, and had returned to the *subdjee barri*. While, therefore, I was stalking him, he was stalking me: the actual spot was even found where he had sat on his haunches watching us, and from which, at the movement I made in raising my gun, he had made his spring.

If I have entered into some detail regarding this it has only been to show that with a leopard—and especially a wounded leopard—it is impossible to be too cautious. I had throughout received information which turned out to be perfectly trustworthy; I had acted on it with all reasonable care; and yet, had it not been for the old *dâk-wallah*——

On more carefully examining the body, we found that this leopard—otherwise a particularly fine male—had a large festering sore between the shoulder-blades. This, no doubt, was what had caused him to abandon the strenuous life of the jungle for his late easier but less honourable existence. Reserving for myself the claws and the curious 'floating collar-bones' (which, nicely mounted, make such neat scarf-pins), I presented the carcase to Tookroo and the *dâk-wallah*. The heart and liver eventually found their way to the Santhals, by whom these organs (*ex bagh*) are highly prized for medicine-making purposes—*e.g.*, Courage tonics.

Need I add that we all rode back in triumphal proces-

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sion—the leopard slung on a pole ; that a terrific jamboree ensued ; and that, though the rains were ended, it turned out an extremely wet night ? But then, in those happy days before the war, we were all bachelors, and the world was very young ! Moreover, the *Burrah Bâdmash Bagh* was dead.

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XIII.

A MIXED BAG.

I.

LONG ago a certain good and wise man taught me that to spend Christmas in a house was a right and proper thing to do if that were in Great Britain, but if not, then the thing was to avoid houses and to spend 25th December and as many days before and after it as possible in camp. This same sage used also to say that a mixed bag was infinitely better than mere numbers.

It was while on our way to put his sayings into practice that J. and I found that we had time to kill at a somnolent little Indian railway station. There it sat very solid and very trim as compared with the slatternly mud village close to it. Around it lay a great flat sea of young wheat and barley. Above were the never-clouded blue winter sky and the always shining, kindly, winter sun. The blue rock-pigeons cooed a lullaby, the telegraph in the station-master's office muttered in its sleep, and the station dozed.

It was under the mistaken idea that we were going to catch a train by a hair's-breadth that we dashed into the station, shattering its noonday repose, and fluttering all its dovecots. The pigeons rushed from theirs, and Mr Huree Narth (I spell him phonetically) rolled quivering from his.

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A vast man this Mr Narth, once an aspirant for the degree of Bachelor of Arts at one of our too numerous Indian universities, and now writing a large 'B.A.' after his name and a very small 'fail' after the 'B.A.'. In this way Mr Narth notifies modestly to the world that he has at least had a jolly good try, although, judging by his English, he must have failed by a wideish margin.

Huree Narth is the station-master, and is upholstered in a pink loin-cloth and an upper garment of muslin. No more unmasculine dress could possibly be devised by man for man, but then its wearer is not manly. He is out of Bengal, where there are not any men, but only soft chocolate-coloured things with great brains, little understanding, and no valour whatever.

On his head and concealing the single lock of hair without which no good Hindu can gain Paradise, is a velvet pork-pie cap of distressing aspect and figured in green. He wears white socks and patent-leather, elastic-sided shoes, adorned with sham mother-of-pearl buttons. Between rim of socks and hem of loin-cloth is an undulatory expanse of chocolate leg. Benevolent spectacles, with a twinkle behind them, complete the station-master's outfit.

If you add him up aright, he should come out a combination of Mr Pickwick and the Friar of Copmanhurst, without the virility of either. Indeed, he makes no pretence to it.

When the last ripples caused by our sudden onset have died from Mr Narth's corpulent body, and when he has settled down again into his natural dimples and creases and folds, he explains that he has taken us for British soldiers, of whom he obviously stands in mortal terror. For Thomas Atkins has a short way with him. He calls a spade a spade, a black man a nigger, and holds that

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the superiority of white over black is a fact beyond all reasonable argument. Sometimes one almost wonders whether Atkins is not right.

Mr Hurree Narth is not exaggerating when he beams on us and says, " I thinking your honours are English soldiers. I am personally pretty cowardly fellow. These are very terrible men, moreover. Their dogs also very terrible. Always biting black peoples."

We need have been in no such hurry. " Sir," said the station-master, referring to our train, " she is late. Perhaps one hour late. Perhaps two hours, moreover. God Almighty knowing."

Naturally we asked Huree Narth what he proposed to do with us for the credit of his station. By thus throwing ourselves on his better nature and bringing to the surface all that was best there, we did a wise thing.

He was at first full of the dreariest suggestions. " Some gentlemen walking on platforms." " Some gentlemen reading time-tables." " Some gentlemen looking at sceneries."

We told him that we were not like any of these gentlemen, and that he must try again. He appeared damped, but hope and kindliness still beamed in those large spectacles.

At last he called our attention to the pigeons. Although his religion forbade his either killing or eating them, he was no bigot in these matters. As a matter of fact, he had of late been suffering, " Sir, from rumblings in belly." As also had Mrs Narth. Consequently, and strictly medicinally, neither he nor his lady would be averse to trying a little pigeon-meat for their stomachs' sake. So we said, " Lead on."

After summoning a lamp-cleaner and a signalman, to whom he referred as " my menial staff," he took us to

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the station grain-sheds, where the pigeons battened on spilt grain. Here we had a hot fifteen minutes, and then there were no more.

Menial staff now armed themselves with fragments of the permanent way, and we were taken to a large well and asked to look in. After the bright sunlight we could see but little except a quivering gleam of water a long way down. But the well resounded with the cooings and flutterings of troglodyte pigeons.

In went a rock and up rushed a pigeon, towering into the blinding light and away to the fields. Another stone, and three more rocketed out, and so on till all seemed to have flown. But the sounds within the well still betokened that the tenants on the basement flats were yet at home. It was then that the great Huree set fire to a sheaf of time-tables and dropped it in. This brought up the die-hards in a bunch. By standing well back and taking the sporting shots, the well, first to last, gave some very pretty shooting and a great variety of shots. We furnished our own pot and, we hope, gave sufficient to station-master and staff to allay all abdominal troubles.

The sounds of an approaching train were now heard, but Hurree Narth assured us of another half-hour, and in addition gave us his word of honour that he would detain her if necessary. He sent us off with his staff, and himself returned to his duties.

In the rough ground round the station we picked up a hare and a couple of grey partridges. As these animals possess a doubtful reputation as regards the niceness of their dietetic tastes, we made the staff happy with them.

We were about to step into the train when Hurree Narth rushed up with pen, ink and paper. An illiterate fellow would have called it a chit, but a B.A. (failed) demanded a 'sartifcut,' and waved the menials away

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when those degraded beings showed symptoms of wanting one too. When we asked him what earthly good a certificate would do him, he smiled his slow babuish smile and gave utterance to two cryptic words, " Perhaps, moreover." So we wrote, " Station-master Hurree Narth has been of the greatest assistance to us when detained at his efficiently run station. He evinced tact, resourcefulness and initiative on a sudden emergency. He appears to be a very capable and much under-valued servant of the Company. We recommend him for speedy promotion to a sphere more in accordance with his merits." We solemnly signed this drivel, which read much like an old-style epitaph, and handed it to H. Narth.

II.

By a little arrangement with the guard, the train, in the most opportune manner, came to a standstill where no station was, but near where our camp happened to be. Everything was flung out of the carriage so as to delay the train as little as possible. That was a point of honour. We were thus saved a four-mile ride and enabled to get to camp well before dark.

India is still a land where these amenities can sometimes be practised with the aid of a very little suavity and a few coins. But gone are those still better times when, with a leading wind and a large square sail, a trolley would carry one at the rate of knots to one's destination. There was a regrettable incident at a bend in a cutting where steam and sail ran into one another. After that sails went completely out.

Our little camp stood just within a grove of mango-trees, on slightly rising ground overlooking six miles of lake. At the far end of this a frosty winter sun was

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just squattering into the water. The whole place was alive with those delightful sounds that waterfowl in their thousands make at sunset—the solemn honking of geese flying in, the contented quackings of undisturbed duck, and the wild, high, creaking notes of Sarus cranes. Where the lake petered out into mud and rushes, just below us, there was the noise as of a boot-heel dragged out of mud, and away went a snipe.

Behind us, under the trees, were our tents, and in that direction arose other pleasing sounds—the rattle of feeding-buckets, the rustling of horses well bedded down, and the sizzle of fires and cooking. All around the jheel lay flat shimmering fields of young wheat and barley, with here and there one of linseed, with its sea of blue flowers presenting an exact similitude to blue water, and, indeed, often taken for water in certain lights.

A servant rushed up and announced that a herd of buck was feeding close up to the grove on the far side. He brought a rifle and cartridges. There was still enough light. So J. took the rifle and I a gun, he to the buck and I to the jheel in the hope of a little flight shooting.

In an hour we were back in camp. I had heard him shoot once, and he had heard my shots ; also the thump that a goose makes when he falls dead on hard ground. J. produced a doe. There had been a few buck, none very shootable, but any quantity of doe, and he had, rightly, shot one of the latter. My contribution was a goose and a few mallard. We laid out the bag according to rule by a blazing fire, which was reinforced to give it heat and heart with cakes of cow-dung. In the making of these the village beldams render the lives of their daughters-in-law burdensome.

What was wanted for our larder we retained, and the

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rest we divided at once among our followers, not forgetting the village headman, who had been helpful, and would now be more so. The bag was entered up, and counting what we had shot at the railway station, now totalled six varieties.

During dinner we decided on our programme for the next few days. We knew the country well, and there were several old friends from the village who came unbidden to offer their services, instead of, as is often the case, absconding so as to avoid giving them. People who live in the middle of plenty such as exists in a duck jheel or where buck abound, but who seldom enjoy it, are ready enough to help if they are assured by experience of having their fair share of game. Only, the man who shoots it must not only say that they are to get it, but must himself see that they do get it. Otherwise the domestics will grow fat, but the men who do the work will get little enough.

We decided to do the jheel next day. Neither of us was very keen on a whole day seated in a cramped dug-out blazing at duck and nothing but duck, and all flying higher and faster than the likes of us cared for. Moreover, to do a large jheel like this properly, a dozen guns would not have been too many. Still, we felt that we owed at least one day to such a well-garnished sheet of water and to the bag. The day after we would abjure water, stick to dry land, and take whatever it offered. And on the third day we would leave guns behind and try what rifle and spear would produce. We were indifferent gun-shots, good rifle-shots, and, if we were not artists with the hog-spear, we were very well mounted, and our horses knew the game.

Three dug-outs were ordered to be ready next morning at 10 A.M., one of them to be at the far end of the jheel.

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Ten o'clock was a latish start, but it was bitterly cold weather. Though we had warm clothes, our men would have but a thin cotton sheet apiece, and to have had them out earlier would have been cruel as well as useless.

III.

A frost of extraordinary intensity on that night and subsequent ones played havoc with some of the more tender crops. Gone were the beautiful blue fields of linseed, and the yellow pulse fields lay blackened and withered. But neither the water-fowl in their millions nor the land-fowl seemed to mind it. Before the first rays of the rising sun came shooting in amongst our tree-trunks there was any amount of business going forward on the water, and the duck, as they rose in countless masses, kept making noises like trains roaring over girder bridges. Partridges and pea-fowl challenged and screamed in the fields and scrub jungle, and battalions of sand-grouse from far overhead sent down their pleasant rippling notes.

At a little before 10 A.M. J. mounted and cantered off to join his dug-out at the far end of the jheel, and a little later I embarked in mine. We were to shape meeting-courses, and would forgather about mid-day and would help one another by keeping the duck on the move.

As we paddled out I found that the dug-out formed the centre of a circle of rufus-coloured heads—red-headed pochard seemed to wall us in. But as we progressed so did the red-headed circumference, and we always remained in the centre and nicely out of range. When I fired a shot the circle would break a little, but it immediately closed up. I could hear J. banging away in the distance, and his birds began and continued to stream over me, very high and wild, for there was no cover whatever,

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and half a gale of cold wind was blowing. J. and I met at an island which was so fouled by geese that we had to sit in our boats and lunch. The bag totalled about fifty head, chiefly pochard, but it included half a dozen grebe for our lady friends' toques. Our cartridges we tactfully refrained from counting. Indifferent shots are happier so. After lunch J. sailed away campwards and I in the opposite direction. During the afternoon I worked the small amount of snipey ground there was, and found the snipe all on their toes ready to off it the moment human boot touched the mud of their swamp. Once off they never came back.

Gladly I left the boat and cantered on J.'s pony back to tea. But we replenished cartridge-bags after this, and went out to our appointed places for the evening flight.

Even when standing shivering waist-deep in water—and here we were on nice dry land just on the edge of the jheel—there is something infinitely fascinating in waiting for the flight. Never does tobacco taste better, and seldom does a man feel such a much better fellow than he really is, or that the world wags so much more merrily than it really does, than during that quiet half-hour which should be allowed before the first arrivals. Before one is no prospect of hours of weary waiting in the dark. An hour and a half, and the best part of that likely to be pretty busy, is the utmost that is profitable —say from set of sun till an hour after full darkness sets in. Even if there were no bird life to watch, and no expectation of those thrilling sounds as fresh arrivals begin to pour in, that quiet sitting after a long day in a buffeting wind would have been well worth while, and profitable both to soul and body. But at this hour the jheel is a very Fleet Street for life, sound and movement ;

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and about the stir and business on the water there is a certain homeliness and peace.

A pied kingfisher, one of the hardest of all bird-workers, was still busy close by me (as he had probably been since sunrise) when I took my seat. Hovering, apparently, with great exertion, he had plopped into the water twelve times in twenty-four minutes. Twice only had he brought back to his thorn-tree a little fish crosswise in his beak, and had jerked it dexterously end-ways and swallowed it. He was already poised for the thirteenth effort when I had to turn away to face a rushing sound behind me. I started shooting eastwards, and continued thus, using the last of the light in that direction, till I found it better to take the birds that flew and silhouetted themselves from and against the glowing west. Then, when this glow died out and the full moon was well up, I turned again east, and took them against the shine of the moon. There were busy minutes when one gun had far more than it could cope with; then idle intervals, then hurricanes of birds from every direction at once.

J., on the far bank, was busy, his gun stabbing the growing darkness with fire spurts, and making no end of noise.

Had one not been shooting, so bright was the moonlight one could have sworn that it was as clear and good for seeing as daylight. But it was not. For though one could hear the rush of coming birds and eagerly stared towards it, they were now only visible from just before the vertical till just behind it—a flitting mass of shapes that blurred the stars and leapt mysteriously out of what seemed a good light to disappear as suddenly into it. Two barrels into each lot, and sometimes a downward rush and a heavy thud or splash as a bird hit land or water. Faster and faster they came, and then slower

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and slower. The jackals, who never miss their chance, were busy along the shores gathering the wounded birds (and, alas! there must always be some) of the day's shooting. These cripples all make for the shore, and those that the hawks leave the jackals get.

The best of the flight was over. The pied kingfisher had finished for the day. So did we. We gathered the fallen, which were chiefly mallard, with a few geese, the main flight of which would probably come later. We laid out and entered up the bag before dinner. In addition to the six varieties of the day before, we now had four more—to wit, grebe, snipe, a bittern and one miscellaneous, which was a king curlew: total, ten varieties. In addition, J. had seen an alligator, which is a very frequent denizen of large jheels, where these are within alligator-walking distance of some big river. I had seen a school of otter, and we had both seen what we thought was a bustard. We resolved to look closer into the matter with the help of glasses on some future occasion.

IV.

This was Algoo's tale. Algoo was an old man who had crept up somewhere near the fire after dinner, and had coughed in a suggestive manner several times before we noticed him and bade him draw nearer to the warmth. Though he was very, very old, there was something about Algoo that bade us stay him with a flagon of rum (a very small one) and await results. He began at once to speak of Beeskark Sahib. There was no explanation of this Beeskark, no telling us as to who, what, or when he was. All the world must know of this Demigod. But we gathered that he had been a great hunter of boar in an infinitely remote past, that he called "all us black men"

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his "little bastards," that his little bastards loved Beeskark Sahib as no other man had ever been loved. That his tongue was a red chilli, and that he beat them often very hard. Out of respect for us, Algoo could not repeat all the pet names that tripped so fondly off Beeskark's red chilli. "For, indeed," said Algoo, "he was our father, and why should not a father beat his children and call them what he likes?" And Algoo had been his companion and shikari for many years.

It appeared that Beeskark occasionally dallied with meaner forms of the chase, but that his real business in life lay with the hog-spear, the horse and the wild boar. No rider rode like Beeskark; no horses were like his horses; no man, in short, was like Beeskark. He was a Bahadur, which is Indian for 'hell of a fellow.'

"For, look you," continued Algoo, warming to his theme, "between the thorn jungle of Raisa and the sand-hills and grass of Bhoora the sahib killed three boar in one run. Without pausing he killed them, first one with a single thrust, then another and then the third, each with one thrust only. All heavy boar, their tushes so long"—and here he chopped his left wrist with the edge of his right hand—"and so high"—here he indicated with his hand a height of not less than five feet. "I have looked at your honours' horses. They are good horses, large and good, but geldings or mares. Not such as Beeskark Sahib rode and killed the three boars on. His horses were little ones, Arabs, off the racecourse, and entires."

Other pæans followed. The sahib had killed three panthers—not in one day—and had not come off scathless; and he had lost a horse over each. One, bitten through the windpipe, had died at once; the others had succumbed to clawing less rapidly. "But what did the

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sahib care! He had plenty." And the sahib had tackled the great boar of Rumna on foot, the boar that would listen to nobody, and had been hunted for many years. With Algoo's help, and after wounding him on horseback, the sahib had killed this angry and obdurate boar with his spear in covert.

It may be explained that a boar who will listen to nobody is not one who runs about with both fore-trotters clapped to his ears, but one who defeats for long all reasoned efforts to kill him—a contumacious stiff-necked boar.

In time Algoo would have depicted his hero as laying into tigers, and, possibly, dropping his elephant with a single thrust behind the elbow. Luckily, however, he dozed off here. When he awoke we again stayed him in the hope that he might bring us to the grand finale. For a whole-hearted thruster like Beeskark might arrive at literally anything, even to a seat on the Viceroy's Council.

But he never really arrived anywhere.

"As I was saying," continued the old man, "there was nothing that the sahib feared. No, nothing. Nothing stopped him or his horses once they got going after a boar, not even the dull-dulls (quicksands) in the river-bed, which can eat elephants. And he always hunted alone—at least, ever since some other sahibs insisted on the dull-dulls being flagged and had let a boar go, by riding round, and not across, black cotton soil. Beeskark was much grieved at this. He and his horses would swim any water, and Algoo had seen them swim out into the middle of the river after a boar that turned and met them half-way across. Fairly they had met, and the boar, with a foreleg pinned to his chest by the sahib's spear, had been unable to swim, and was drowned."

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When the floods were out once and no riding possible, the sahib had followed a boar in a boat, explaining to Algoo that on horseback or on foot, with a spear—yes; but from a boat—no. He had then jumped on to the boar's back, seized him by the ears, and drowned him. Often had Algoo warned the sahib that the pitcher would go once too often to the well, and that the habit of killing wounded boar in covert on foot would mean trouble. "But, look you," replied the sahib to the sagacious warning, "when I spear them on horseback it is the horse that does it and gets cut; not I. Good sport for the horse, but for me—it's egg without salt."

"As I was saying," rambled on the ancient, "before I became Beeskark Sahib's shikari, there was one Alayar, a Mussulman. This Alayar was a good shikari, else he had not served the sahib for long, but he was a bad man. He took half the money paid to each beater always. That was custom. No one minded much. He did many other tyrannical things as he became richer. The sahib paid well and gave enormous buksheesh after a good day. When a man becomes rich he can do as he likes. Everyone fears him. He can hire witnesses, as many as he likes. Two men, with whom Alayar had a quarrel, he implicated in a murder. He hired corpse and witnesses and the best lawyers. One of the men was hanged; the other went overseas. Alayar's house was burnt down once or twice. That was all we dared to do. At last one day Beeskark Sahib had beaten the coverts near the village here. Six boar had been killed. In the evening, after weighing and measuring the pig, he did as he always did on reaching camp. Even before he had seen to his horses, he always set all the beaters in a row—there were a hundred of them—and, beginning at one end, he walked down the line and hit each eighth man on the head with

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his stick, saying, 'Stand up, dishonest one,' or 'Stand up, Son of Shame,' or 'Stand up, Five Farthings.' Just as our mothers speak to their children to keep away evil spirits. Then, when every eighth man was standing up, and when every man had given up the gun-wad which he had as a token, the sahib would call for the bag of rupees and, walking down the line again, would give one rupee to each of the standing men, and say, 'Two annas for yourself, Fathead, and two for each little bastard on your right. See to it.' To odd men he would always give the exact amount in small change. And he would always reward anyone who had done well.

"He always did exactly the same every time he paid the beaters, and always used the same words. And so he did that day.

"Of the six pig, he gave the smallest to his syces and the rest to the beaters. Then he said, 'Now go and eat.' And we went away to the village. It had been a long hot day—a very hot day—but we were all contented and went to the village.

"There Alayar met us and took from each man one anna out of the two that each had received. That was nothing. It was custom. But he then ordered us to hand over the five pig as well. He said, 'These pig are mine. I shall now sell the meat to anyone who wants it at two annas for two pounds.' Now, since early that morning we had been beating, and it was May. At mid-day, when the sahib had stopped hunting to let us drink water, Alayar had also taken half of the sack of parched grain which the sahib always provided for us to eat and so become strong for the afternoon's work.

"One of our women who was present crept away in the dark and went to the sahib's camp. No one but a hungry woman with children would have dared to do that.

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There, falling on the ground near the table where the sahib was having dinner, she wept aloud. He called to her to go away. But, being a woman, she continued to weep and to throw earth on her head and to cry aloud over and over again, 'Half our pay—half our parched grain, and all our pig! Father of my father, we are all dead——'

"At last the sahib understood what was the matter. His face became white like the table-cloth with rage. He told the woman to go quietly back to the village and to send me. And when I came he said, 'Algoo, I have long known of this Mussulman's wickedness. Be a man now. Do not fear. Get three other witnesses, and I swear that we will finish the rascal. You shall then be my shikari. Then who will hurt you?' I returned to the village. But all were afraid. I said, however, to three men that the sahib had ordered them, name by name, to come forward and give evidence, and that if they refused, perhaps they knew what the sahib would do to them for I did not. Then they became more frightened of the sahib than of Alayar, and said, 'But did the sahib name us by name?' And I said, 'Yes, by your names and your fathers' names.'

"Presently the sahib rode bareback into the village where we were all gathered. First he said to the smith, 'Get your fire going and heat me an iron bar.' Then he ordered any strangers that were in the village to depart. Then he sat on the well and said, 'Now we will hold a little trial.' After the three witnesses had given evidence, many more men and women came forward and spoke against Alayar—both as concerned that day's doings and many other crimes he had committed. But the sahib said that this trial was only for defrauding beaters of their pay and their meat.

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" He then asked Alayar what he had to say, and Alayar hung down his head and said nothing. The sahib then said that he would pay the beaters again, but that he wanted a good deal of money. To Alayar he said, ' Go and fetch three hundred rupees.' And Alayar said he was a poor man, and had not got so much money in the whole world.

" ' Look you, Alayar,' said the sahib, ' I take out my watch. I give you fifteen minutes to bring the money, only now I shall want four hundred rupees. Several men will go with you who will help you. And if you don't find it you will go and look for it at the bottom of the well. Go.'

" When he came back with the money he found the beaters seated for payment, and the sahib paid out the money in the usual way: the whole four hundred rupees.

" The smith then said that the iron was hot. We bound Alayar hand and foot. And the sahib branded him on both cheeks. And Alayar screamed.

" Then the sahib said, ' We have now finished with this Soor. Let him go to his house. To-morrow he will leave the village and the district. See to it, Alayar, that you never come back. If you do you will leave the village again by way of the well. Then you will certainly never return.'

" This," concluded Algoo, " was indeed justice. No delay and no bribes."

The old man ran down here like a clock that wants winding. We applied the key, and hoped to obtain some clue as to who this heady hog-hunter might have been. The proper rendering of ' Beeskark ' might be guessed with a fair amount of certainty by those who are conversant with Indian mutilations of British surnames. To arrive at an approximate date we tried to get hold of Algoo's

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age. He assured us blandly that he had never kept reckoning of that, but that he must be "some hundred and forty years old," and that all the foregoing happened when he was a very young man. As to whether Beeskark was soldier or civilian, Algoo could or would give us no information. As to his appearance—why, yes—he was like a tiger. His teeth were white and sharp, and he ground them usually when talking and always when angry, which was very often.

He wore spectacles, did this demigod, and, sometimes after periods in camp, a short beard. The colour of his hair was like that of that horse yonder (a bright chestnut), and his eyes were like a water buffalo's (china blue), of aspect very terrible—even to other sahibs. Once—and here the old clock started ticking in earnest—Algoo was seeing him off by train somewhere after a spear-running in which dacoits and wild-boar were rather mixed. But Beeskark had killed them all. The sahib's clothes were bloody and the train late, the Babu station-master amiss in some way, and the sahib, of course, very angry. Eventually, and garnished with beard, spectacles and a leash or so of hog-spears, he had bundled into a carriage grinding his teeth. Yes—very terrible to see. In the carriage sat two other young sahibs. They looked at Beeskark for a moment, and then, opening the farther door, had softly vanished.

In endeavouring to add up these descriptions, and so to evolve a picture of Algoo's demigod, we seemed to stray into regions heraldic, for here we had a tiger, mane and beard Gules, holding a spear Proper, behind which were eyes Azure. The whole Rampant and with teeth Gnashant. Others might work Beeskark out to a different result, but for ourselves we were convinced that such a man as he answered perfectly to this description and to

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these tinctures. None other would have fitted such a hell of a fellow half so well. We should have been glad to have seen him at work on one of these little blood Arabs of his.

"And what became of the sahib in the end?" we naturally asked.

"One day," said Algoo, "he went away, telling me to go as usual once a month to the post-office to receive a money-order for my pay until he came back. But he never came back. For a year each month I went and received my money-order, and then it stopped. After that there was no more trace of him, absolutely no more trace."

"But did he never write?" we asked.

"Write!" said the old man testily, "of course he could write—and read too—quite easily. But who was I that he should write me letters or I that I should read them? Nevertheless he esteemed me very highly, very highly indeed. There are no more like him nowadays. No, none. Perhaps they can't catch their pig for all their big horses, or perhaps they fear quicksands or black cotton soil." (He touched us here: we both loathed sand that was quick and soil that was black.)

"So they come and shoot ducks instead." Algoo looked at us very hard here. The iron went right home. Lest we made hasty resolutions to smash up our guns and abjure all sport but pig-sticking, we said good night to Algoo, venturing to hope that Beeskark might yet turn up. "No," said Algoo, "I think he is dead."

V.

Turning our backs on the jheel next morning and pointing for the river, we hoped we might arrive there. But as there were eight miles of sporting-looking country

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to traverse, and we had with us horses and spears as well as guns and rifles, it seemed probable that there might be distractions. It would therefore be unwise to reckon on getting anywhere but back to camp that night.

Buck were in any quantity. We were never out of sight of them, and the harm they were doing to the crops must have been immense. Everywhere were visible those frail platforms, some eight or ten feet high, from which children by day and old folk by night scared the marauders from their own fields to those of their neighbours.

Trapping the buck was, of course, out of the question, because only the trapping caste can do that, and these people only paid occasional visits and hardly abated the nuisance. Demarkation, of which we hear so much these days, is as old as the hills, and results in the buck living on the people instead of the other way about.

We said we would shoot a few, and we said unwisely.

We could never get within 400 yards of the buck. So we borrowed two passing bullock-carts, and, seated in them, we were able to get within easy pot-shot range, just dropping off for the shot. But this was a most unsporting method, and, moreover, amongst the hundreds of buck visible in every direction there was not a single notable head. So we shot a few for the people with us and then put our rifles away. We were, however, told that if we wanted big heads we must go to some Moorram, or high gravelly ground fifteen miles away, and we made a note of it.

Some scrub jungle yielded a hare or two, a few little bush quail, who got up with a most thundering and startling whir, and some grey partridges and pea-fowl. Of two little jheels that lay across our route, one was stiff with teal and the other with snipe, the first allowing

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us just two barrels apiece, and the second a hot ten minutes ere we had taken toll and the survivors quitted. But, as we were going on, sand-grouse began to pour down on to the now vacant teal jheel. So we went back to it. The sand-grouse were of the small variety and thirsty. Drink they would, and pack after pack came pouring down out of the sky on to our heads. A good many entered the bag. Of a snipe and a hawk which swooped on to him, which we downed with a right and left, we picked up the hawk lying dead on its back, with the snipe, also dead, held up aloft in its talons.

While resting at a village there was a casual mention of wolves in the neighbourhood, and a keen youth, to whom we promised a king's daughter in marriage, said he would show us the covert where they sometimes harboured, though he would not promise that we should find them at home.

Now it is the ambition of everyone to ride down a wolf, but not many have the luck to try, or if they do, to succeed, for the Indian wolf is the devil to run, and will stay out any but a very fit horse. Still, wolves have been thus killed, but only after desperately gruelling runs and on suitable ground.

This was quite a snap show. A dozen beaters were put into covert, a small wood with almost impenetrable undergrowth. They beat it anyhow, chiefly in single file along a narrow path. We waited at the far end and well hidden.

Luck was in. We had not waited ten minutes when out lolloped a big grey wolf. Had it been twilight he might have passed for a large leggy dog. He headed away apparently for nowhere, which was very obliging and singularly careless of him. We allowed him any amount of law, for to have given a hint of our presence would have sent him straight back to covert. We must

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have let him go nearly a mile, and he was clearly visible in the young crops, strolling along as if the whole place belonged to him. We then trotted quietly after him, keeping well apart. He responded to this soothing treatment, and continued trotting away from covert. In this way, and never nearer than 800 yards, we nursed him along for another couple of miles. Then we started in.

It was a featureless run, over a country as flat and as green as a billiard-table, and not a toss in twenty miles of it. Such runs are happy ones, for they have no history. But it was a long run; how long we never knew, for landmarks there were none, and we had not looked at watches on starting. But a great many miles slid away under our horses' bellies.

Two things only were tested: the staying power of our horses, and judgment on our part in adjusting the speed to the horses and in making it a little too hot for the wolf.

He let us get on terms with him at once, just as that much faster animal the blackbuck will. Then, secure in his speed, he quickened his stride, and kept a score of paces ahead of us. The going was ideal for our hooves, but perhaps a little less so for his soft pads. Gradually he brought up his left shoulder and came slowly round towards covert. But that was five or six miles away now.

Then we saw something that we liked better than his stern. And that was his tongue. A little later his stride lost a little of its rhythm—no faltering yet, but a tiny fault of metre, and there was more tongue. Then his grey sides grew darker. His tongue was fairly out now. A mile was left us, and we could afford to wait no longer. We called on our horses and started pressing.

It was at once evident that the wolf had shot his bolt. He started jinking. It was now a question only as to who should get the spear. Once and again J. thought

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he had him, and once and again did I. Finally, J. rolled him over clean and dead as the wolf crossed him with a nice 400 yards clear in hand to his covert. Pipes and timbrels! But we were pleased!

Whether our horses could have done it under a May instead of a December sun I do not know. I doubt it; and the going would have been iron.

To the keen youth we gave, not a king's daughter, but the Government reward for a wolf, with which he was infinitely better pleased.

It was getting towards sunset when we reached the river bank. The far bank lay three miles away. Between the two was a sea of high yellow grass and dark green tamarisk, reed-beds, swamps, creeks and sandy nullahs. Amongst these the river, shrunk to its cold-weather dimensions, found a tortuous channel. The whole is called the kadir, or river-bed, and there is more game and greater variety of game in a kadir country than in any other kind. Its chief inhabitant is the boar, but there are meaner animals, such as the tiger, panther, stag and antelope, and great store of wildfowl. We were actually overlooking the happy hunting-grounds and preserves of the X Tent Club. Chasing pig here, even had it been possible now, was debarred to us.

We laid out the bag as usual before dinner: two little plump quail side by side with the lean wolf, besides the buck, hare, snipe and teal. The varieties now totalled fourteen.

VI.

Next day we had a ride of fifteen miles and a shift of camp into another district. According to programme we took spears only, for we were to try some jungle-covered hills for pig.

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Before starting on the ride we had a good look round for the bustard, and we viewed him pacing his fields as solemnly as a policeman paces his beat. Both are large animals and both are dignified, but the bustard is more dignified than the policeman. We viewed him first through glasses, but when we attempted to get closer and view him over sights he would have none of us. He ceased pacing and flew away. So we rode away.

A few hours later our beaters were strung out from the base of an isolated hill, up the side, across the top, and down the other side, and were slowly moving towards us who were concealed on the plain. We will drop a veil here. It does no good dwelling on distressing details. One hour later a large sow lay dead at J.'s feet, and J. had decided as a professional man (he was a doctor) that she was a barren sow, and therefore killable. He made this statement *ex cathedra*, and it is ill arguing with a doctor when he takes up that sort of attitude. I ventured, however, to ask him what were the proofs of his victim's sterility. He replied, " First, I object to your calling her a victim. Next, she is barren even to the eye of a layman owing to that tuft of hair. And thirdly, she rose at me before I speared and bit me through the boot here, bruising the skin but not breaking it."

True, she had. But whether that were mere dialectics or not I could not say. So I said nothing. As the polite Oriental writes when he cannot think of anything more to put in his letter, " To say more would savour of disrespect."

But later, when J. was in his bath, I held a modest autopsy on that sow, and confronted J. with the evidence, and said, " One gold mohur, please," the usual fine inflicted by a Tent Club on a member who kills a pig that is too small, too light, or of the wrong sex.

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He paid it and was silent. It paid the beaters nicely, and something over for myself.

We thus added one more variety to the bag, in which the sow figured as " Pig 1, unmeasured." And we proposed to add another variety on the morrow, for we had seen Ravine deer during the beat.

VII.

But we spoke too loud, and the Ravine deer, or Chinkara, must have heard us, for next day these beautiful little gazelle, usually to be found just when and where you expect them, were not, and our bag was fated not to contain a pair of those graceful lyrated horns, the natural colour of which (the grey-green of moss or lichen) taxidermists have a fondness for painting black and varnishing.

We spent a pleasant casual day, part of it by a river where, if there is nothing else to be seen, one can usually have a shot at an alligator. The sun was just a nice heat to bring the saurian out to bask, and when we laid our glasses on to a distant sandspit we saw a small bevy of the snub-nosed kind lying on the sand. We were able to get close up, for the brutes lay under a steep bank. One of them lay with his mouth agape. We had no buns with us, so we fed him a bullet in the neck, and for once in a way he lay stone-dead. We tested deceased's armour-plating with a hog-spear, which will pierce most things. To our surprise the rough and seemingly impenetrable hide on his back was fairly easily pierced, while the smooth belly-skin was proof. It is the latter skin that tans into such good leather.

Farther on we came to a great stretch of high dry grass, far too high to see to shoot in, and yet it looked as if it must hold black partridge. We were pondering

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as to what was to be done when a couple of pad elephants hove in sight and bore straight down on us. Their mahouts told us that they belonged to a local squireen, and had been sent out to cut grass for thatching. Their elephants were not gun-shy, and were often used for shooting. We were soon up and passed twice through the grass, getting a few black partridge (francolin) each time. A fine sporting bird this, quite unlike his grey cousin, always ready for gamesome flight and with as hearty a challenge as any I know. One of the elephants, a female, was, or pretended to be, terrified when ordered to pick up a dead bird. She approached it almost on tiptoe, craned her neck, put out her trunk, nearly touched the bird, and then started back. She was again brought up to the scratch and hit pretty smartly on the head. This time she picked up the bird, but dropped it at once, as if it had been red-hot iron. Again she was brought up, and, after screwing her courage to the sticking-point, picked up the bird, but instead of handing it to her mahout, flung it right over her head and ten yards behind her. She got a sad hammering for this and a shower of abuse. But we had to use her male companion as retriever.

We had a most enjoyable loafing day, but it contributed only a few black partridges to the bag. We were not fallen so low as to count, even among ' Miscellaneous,' the alligator.

VIII.

Next day we were for the high ground, where we had been told all the shootable buck were gathered. It was a long ride there, but we had with us that most excellent convenience, a riding camel. This saved us all the bother

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of carrying rifles and food, and provided us with a horse-holder while we were shooting, and a means for bringing back the venison when we had finished. During breakfast a servant reported that the "harrial had arrived," by which he meant that a flock of green pigeon were about, and that we had better shoot them. The harrial is a bird, not of beautiful colours but of beautiful nuances, so delicate are his mauves, yellows, greens, greys and buffs, and so delicately merged. He has a most tuneful whistle. Gourmets say that he is good to eat. He is much too good to shoot, say I.

We set out on the long ride a little sceptical about this gathering of old buck dwelling apart from the young buck and the does. We had never heard of this being done by antelope. But it was an excuse for a ride on a beautiful day and for seeing something of the country. Two hours at a steady trot, with ten minutes' rest after the first hour, brought us there. From out of the flat expanse of green fields rose a bare gravelly rib, uncultivated, which, four miles farther on, again sank to the level of the plain. At its broadest it might have been a mile or so across, and it had a command of forty to sixty feet. Certainly there were a lot of buck on it and not a doe, so far as I remember. As to size there was nothing to make a song about.

There is a sameness about buck-shooting that soon palls. The venison is poor eating. The old buck himself outrages every law and theory of protective colouring, for the black-and-white of a rifle-range target are not more pronounced and conspicuous than the black-and-white of the mature buck. As if aware of the hopelessness of trying to hide himself, he chooses the most exposed ground as his habitat, where, if he can be seen by his enemies, he can see them equally well. Then he offs it,

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bounding high into the air every few strides, probably to get a wider view.

When crops are high enough to cover the squatting villagers, who all work in this position and are invisible, the fellow who persists in buck-shooting is doing a very wrong thing. I have sinned myself, having fired at and killed a buck with a bullet that passed on through a belt of trees, then through the walls of a grass hut some six hundred yards farther on, through the clothes of a man grinding corn inside the hut, and finally flattened itself against one of the grindstones. The man, not the least resentful, but perhaps a little hopeful, brought the bullet to me. Whatever I paid him was a dirt-cheap price for an experience which I have never forgotten.

Our best head that day was not quite twenty-three inches. To J., I think the taping of a buck's horns was always an operation fraught with painful memories. Long ago we had discovered that he was measuring his buck round the spirals, and not straight from base to tip. It was some time before he heard the last of it.

IX.

To Lieutenant-Governors their thousands, to Viceroys their tens of thousands, but to us our modest hundreds. Let these, however, be well mixed. For that way to us, and, we suspect, to many others, lies true happiness.

We had still a few more days' shooting, but as they added no varieties to the bag, so they will not add to these lines.

We finished up with sixteen varieties, counting all the different kinds of teal and duck as one variety only. A

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grebe is doubtful, but we counted him in and did not include him in ' Miscellaneous.'

. . . . . .

" Sir," said the failed Bachelor of Arts, as we shed a haunch of venison for himself and some gobbets of swine's flesh for his staff, " I now remembering your honours always. Moreover, I am praying for your honours' welfare night and day."

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XIV.

RAMMU.

RAMMU was an aboriginal of the Vindhyan Sandstone hills in Central India. He entered my life one night in the rains, when all the world had turned to blue lightning and running water, and even the frogs were battered into silence. Asleep in the verandah, I was awakened by some one gently pulling at my right toe, which is the correct Indian method of rousing a heavy sleeper. Anticipating no more urgent news than that the bungalow thatch had at last fallen in, I inquired, not too politely, what the trouble was. Then there stole up from the foot of the bed to the pillow end a deplorable sample of brown humanity, and realising that something was seriously the matter, I sat sideways on the bed to get a better view of him.

He was about five feet high, and stark naked, except for a dirty rag round his temples. The steady flicker of the lightning lit up his dripping body, but even if his face had been invisible, the pattern of the axe he carried showed that he was from the jungles. His teeth were chattering so violently with cold and exposure that he could not utter a word in answer to my questions. He was in grave mental trouble also. An uneducated Indian confessing to a misdemeanour seizes the lobe of one ear in his left hand and stands on one leg, in token of abject penitence. Speech failing him, the little man made desperate efforts to put himself into the position demanded,

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as he evidently considered, by the occasion, but he was stiff and stupid and shivering. First he dropped his axe, which he promptly retrieved with his toes; then he hesitated between a choice of ears, and when, finally, he selected one, even his splay aboriginal foot proved a pediment inadequate to his rocking body, and he fell with a clatter on the flags. I helped him to his feet and into the office, where there was a lantern burning. A rug and a tot of whisky put life into him, and he told me his story.

He was a Bhoi Gond from the teak forests on the eastern border, and had come to tell me that he had killed his wife the morning before. The elders of the village, his caste fellows, had said that the Sarkar insisted on full and early information of such happenings, in the absence of which they would be put to grievous troubles. So he had started for headquarters at once, trusting to cover the thirty odd miles before nightfall. But heavy rain came down and all the streams rose. He had swum three rivers and lost his waist-cloth in one (but not, I observed, his axe !). Then he had been overtaken by a colic. All these things had delayed him, and he had been obliged to wake me up, for he had been given to understand the matter was urgent. His wife had persisted in burning his bread, and no man could put up with that for ever, though he had been long-suffering and beaten her patiently for weeks. On the latest occasion, however, instead of taking her beating quietly, she had called him two shameful names and run out of the hut. After a short pursuit he had thrown his axe at her. He could not tell where the weapon had struck her, because he had not looked, but she fell and never rose again, and she was certainly dead, and he had brought the axe as ordered by the village headman. His story told, he curled up in a corner of the office and went to sleep.

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The sessions judge who in due time tried him, found himself in a dilemma. To begin with, by the time the police had waded to the village, the corpse had disappeared. Then there were no witnesses of the offence, and while he was compelled to accept the accused's version of the facts, he was equally bound to believe his statement that he had no intention of killing the woman, The axe was scarcely heavier than a toy. Eventually Rammu was convicted of causing hurt with a dangerous weapon and sentenced to three months' rigorous imprisonment.

A week after his release he appeared in my verandah with an appropriate testimonial of his gratitude. Not for him to offer the ' dolly ' of pineapples and guavas, melons and graft mangoes, that the civilised Hindu on high days and holidays deposits at the District Officer's doorway. But he had his axe, which cost only fourpence, and his eyes, and some hundreds of miles of jungle to ransack, and the pile of uncanny eatables that he poured on the verandah flags would have stocked a small greengrocer's shop. There were yams, horribly resembling scalded puppies with their legs lopped off, and contorted roots like knotted ropes which, he explained, must be scraped and soaked for a whole night in running water to steep the poison out of them. Otherwise the eater would become violently insane. There were green and golden fruits of agonising sourness or astringency, and sometimes of both, many varieties of indigestible-looking seeds, and a heap of sickly yellow flowers with fleshy petals that smelt like hair-wash. These last were to give flavour to the yams. When I had sufficiently admired his present he stood on one leg, put his palms together, looked me cheerfully in the face, and said in a loud voice, " Hé, Dadda, make me your servant ! "

I did not accept his offer. To put a wild Bhoi to house-

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work would have been sheer cruelty, and though his prehensile toes were eminently fitted to recover my shirt-stud from its frequent escapings under the dressing-table, I could not afford to keep a man exclusively for this function. I thought of making him a grass-cut, but, like all his people, he was far more afraid of a horse than of a tiger, and this career was obviously closed to him. In the end we compromised to this effect, namely, that whenever my tours fell in the jungly tracts of the district, he, Rammu, on receipt of due notice, was to accompany me on a wage of fourpence per diem, help me in shikar and enlighten my ignorance on the subject of trees, birds, animals and jungle life in general. I never made a better bargain in my life, and now that he is dead—'gone,' as his own people express it, 'to the far folk'—a more than transient regret for the loss of a loyal friend and delightful companion suggests this humble tribute to his memory.

There was nothing of the noble savage in his appearance, which was that of an undersized elderly gnome carved in chocolate. Arms, legs and body were, considering his powers of endurance, astonishingly lacking in muscle, his shoulders were rounded, and he walked with a slight limp, due to the bite of a wild sow on whose litter he had, as a boy, inadvertently stumbled. The scars of this were conspicuous on the back of one thigh, where the muscle seemed permanently shrunken. His feet were very large, and as useful to him as an extra pair of hands. A dirty rag, from which fluttered a long elf-lock bleached to a rusty brown, round his scalp, and a similar, but if possible, dirtier, waist-cloth, were his attire in all seasons. In short, he was a sufficiently typical specimen of the pre-Aryan races of India, whom the Hindu invader of the

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plains still regards with mingled contempt and dread, abhorring their indifference to ceremonial ablution, but crediting them with knowledge of the blackest magic and unconquerable spells.

> " They know the secret of the hills
> And the oldest kind of song."

Now, to extract information of any kind from the aboriginal of the Vindhyan hills is generally a heart-breaking affair. Centuries of furtive existence and, whenever he could be caught, of maltreatment, at the hands of stronger races, have made him as suspicious as a carp. He scents a hook in every question. " Why," he reasons, " does the Sahib ask me about flying squirrels ? If I tell him, he will order me to show him one. He will walk a long way, get thirsty, and perhaps we may not see a single squirrel. Then he will get angry, and in any case his servants will put me on to do unpleasant jobs about his camp." Accordingly, he answers that he himself has never seen such an animal—but, yes ! he hears that they abound in the jungles of the next range, forty miles away. Questioned on the subject of bears, or what he ate yesterday, or the propriety of marrying a deceased wife's sister, he will evade responsibility with the same exasperating weariness. In numberless attempts to ' draw ' these jungle people on matters concerning their daily lives I had experienced to the full

> " The sick fatigue, the languid doubt,
> Which much to have tried, in much been baffled brings ; "

and now that Providence had, so to speak, delivered into my hands a wild Bhoi, body and soul, I proceeded with a caution born of many disheartening failures to make

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the most of him. The initial difficulty of winning his confidence had already been surmounted. The rest, when one had grasped the fact that the question direct was the least promising method of inducing him to talk, was comparatively plain sailing.

He was, as I have said, a delightful companion, and the charm of his conversation lay as much in the manner as in the subject of it. Bilingual from childhood, he spoke in a Dravidian tongue among his fellow-tribesmen, but to me in a pure, deliberate, vivid Hindi, choosing his words carefully much as certain Gaelic-speaking Highlanders venture upon the English language. He was, I believe, physically incapable of telling an intentional falsehood. I have in my mind a blowing March morning, when the tall cotton-trees were in full blossom, each tree a tower of crimson against a dazzling blue and white sky. Rammu had just chopped a dishevelled hen hornbill out of her nest in a hollow trunk, where her husband, after the manner of hornbills, had walled her in with mud until such time as her maternal duties should be completed. After this exploit a rest in the shade and a smoke were imperative, and our talk slid from birds to snakes in general, and, finally, to my objective, that magnificent rarity, the great rock python.

"I have heard," I said airily, "that crocodiles, when they attain a certain age, crawl up from rivers into caves of the mountains. Then their hands and feet drop off, their hide, by much rubbing against the stones, becomes thin, and they turn into 'azhgars'—pythons." (This interesting item of natural history had been imparted to me, in the best of faith, by a Bengali pleader.)

The bait was swallowed. "That is false," he replied earnestly. "God made the two creatures distinct from birth. I have seen a python once in my life, when I was a

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boy, on my way down to the wheat harvest. I heard a snoring sound from a nullah, and peeping over the bank, saw an 'azhgar' with a dog jackal half way down her throat. She was about as long as three men and as thick as my thigh. Then I carried the news to the gentry and landowners of the villages round about, and they gave me free victuals and came and held a council, sitting on both sides of the great snake as if they were at a wedding. Some said, 'When she has digested the jackal she will certainly devour our children. Let us kill her.' But the elder men declared that to kill her would bring a curse upon them. 'From underground she came, to the earth let her return.' So they dug a trench in the nullah, and rolled her into it while she lay gorged, and heaped the earth over her again, and I went on my way." Pythons, he added, drew their prey from a distance by their powers of suction, at least so he had heard. God knew if it was true. He was always scrupulously careful to distinguish hearsay from direct evidence. On another occasion we talked of sloth-bears, 'reech,' of which he and his people dwelt in great fear. Four men of his village were once gathering mahwa fruit in the jungle, when a 'reech' charged out upon them and wantonly mauled one of their number, so that he was never the same man again. The rest escaped to the village and told their story. "Then a lad of eighteen years rose up and cut a green staff as long and as thick as his arm, and said he would punish the bear. He paid no heed to our prayers and warnings, but took the staff in his left hand and laid his axe on his shoulder and went out alone, but we followed at a distance. When the bear heard the 'jhomp, jhomp' of his footsteps, he ran at him roaring. Then the young man held out the greenwood staff in his left hand and said, 'Bite that, you rascal.' So the bear bit it, and the young

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man smote him on the forehead with the axe, and the 'reech' rolled over dead." Those of us who have stood up to a charging bear, and felt far from happy even behind two barrels of a bone-smashing express of faultless workmanship, with all the security that low trajectory, cordite shells, and soft-nosed bullets can offer, will appreciate the heroism of this unsung David of the sandstone ranges. Rammu's opinion was that 'a god had entered into him.'

His style, hardly communicable in translation, of terse and vivid description, made it a delight to hear him talk even of common things. One knew, of course, that in early June the men of the jungles went over the precipices to gather wax and wild honey; but his description of this operation, as we sat under a cliff four hundred feet sheer from base to sky-line, elevated it into the epic. In the morning, the cutting and testing of green creepers to serve for ropes, the lashing of them on to rude cradles, the weaving of baskets to hold the heavy combs. Then in the darkest hour of the night, for bees are dangerous even in moonlight, the lowering of the cradles, two men in each, over the precipices into the black gulf of the 'khud.' One man holds the basket, some light lines and a sickle, the other a bamboo pole with a bundle of grass on the end, and in his head-cloth is a smouldering flake of dried cow-dung. Both have just rubbed wild garlic over their naked bodies. Keeping their feet against the rock, they are lowered to a point a little below the first comb to be attacked. The grass is set ablaze beneath the comb, and up swirls the angry swarm with a deafening roar. The forsaken comb, often as large as a small barrel, is hacked off into the baskets, which are then lowered to the bottom. And so, working swiftly, silently, and in deadly peril, they strip a cliff of a dozen combs in a single night. "Are they often stung?" "Always, more or less," says

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Rammu, for neither smoke nor wild garlic is a perfect safeguard. Sitting in their crazy swings, dangling in the black night, at the end of sappy vegetable ropes, tortured by stinging bees, and knowing that a hasty movement may betray their presence to the whole swarm, these men put their lives in annual jeopardy, to the huge profit of some swindling Hindu middleman.

Yet he would, when in the humour, enlighten me on small things as carefully and conscientiously as on greater matters. How was I to recognise a chameleon? Why, her gait (all his reptiles were feminine) was like the gait of an elephant, and if you shook a stick at her she turned black. Both of which statements, as I have since discovered by personal observation, are true. Storks form up in line across a shallow inlet, and then, dancing and stamping, drive the frogs before them on to dry land and eat them at their leisure. He had seen them do it. Sambhur stags, when their heavy horns become a weariness, hook them over a low bough and swing to and fro to loosen them. He could show me such a bough, all scored and cut, and had picked up the horns underneath it, but had never seen the great beasts a-swing, because they moved about by night.

Squatting by the camp-fire of an evening, firmly based on his enormous feet, and with the light playing on his grotesque features, he would often tell me of his own life and doings. For three months of the year he lived on his own crop of grass-like millet, from which the greenish-brown 'bread,' source of the fatal quarrel, is baked. In February he and his family (his first wife had borne him three children and died in the 1897 famine) would migrate to the plain for the harvesting, children and all—*un qui marche, un qui tette, et un qui vient.* How well one knows those tired little processions of the very poor on the dusty

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passes leading to the wheat lands ! Generation by generation he and his had tramped fifty miles to cut the crops of the same fields. One sheaf in twenty, neither more nor less, was his hire, and his father's and grandfather's before him. The farmer left the counting to him, and made no objection if the wage sheaf were a little heavier than the others. The threshing finished, he would thatch the homestead, and thus his living was assured to the end of April. May found him back in the jungles with a heavy basket of wheat laid by, and, eking out his cakes with wild fruits, he lived in idleness till the coming of the rains in June. Then he would borrow five or ten rupees to carry him on till the ripening of his millet in autumn, and in the rains, also, the ground was soft and he could dig up yams. He had credit up to twenty rupees with his ancestral Bania, and naturally his debt always stood at that amount. In the famines he went hungry, and as bad as any famine was a doleful year when his first father-in-law paid him a three months' visit. The old man had, or professed to have, a weak stomach, and could digest nothing but rice. The purchase of this expensive food had reduced his host to an exclusive diet of roots and fruits which, unfortified by grain of some kind, are a wretched makeshift.

I gathered that in normal years he worked four days out of the seven, except at harvest time, and on off days he basked in the sun or warmed himself over a fire. He paid nothing for the privilege of sleep, for which the poor man in England is mulcted so cruelly, his house and firing cost him nothing, and he never knew the grinding tyranny of cold. He had no vices, except for a rare and harmless drinking-bout, and no temptations to any. His life and thought and language were pure, and, as I have endeavoured to show, the horizon of his days was broad and

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varied. He was certainly a happier man than the average worker on the wharves or countryside of England, whose lot would have been a poor exchange for his own.

I sat at his feet, or, more literally, trod in his footsteps, for two cold weathers, during which period I won from him much priceless knowledge. But at the end of one rainy season his son, a straighter and more supple replica of the shivering gnome whom the lightning flashes had revealed to me two years before, stood on the same verandah flags and spoke three words: "Rammu-ka dehant bhao," that is, "Rammu's body has come to an end." A fierce fever of the jungles had carried him off in a few days. Then, as the son was the shyest of the shy, he took permission to leave the terrible headquarters, haunt of uniformed policemen and jail warders and scornful orderlies, and forthwith went away to his home.

So Rammu, axe on shoulder, treads the shadowy road to the far folk, and will never come back again. Pluto, let us hope, will receive the little man kindly at his journey's end, and Orion, perhaps, will now and then ask him to join in the hunting. And if there is harvesting in those 'fruitless fields of corn,' Rammu will surely be there with a borrowed sickle, and, standing on one leg in presence of the lord of the harvest, will put his palms together before his face and say, "Hé, Dadda, make me your servant!" One sheaf in twenty will he demand, neither more nor less. But I shall never walk through the teak forests without missing him, and it will be long before I have the heart to begin all over again with another Bhoi Gond.

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XV.

THE SCOURGE OF A DISTRICT.

A MAN-EATING tiger is supremely bad; but a man-eating panther, hardened in sin, is superlatively worse. The tiger waits by the wayside to gather up what the gods of the jungle may send him. He will pull down an unfortunate charcoal-burner as he passes on his lawful occasions along a jungle road in India. A villager's luck fails him as he returns home one evening; and the next morning a shrill wailing in the village, and possibly a cloud of vultures hovering over one particular spot in the jungle, announce that the man-eater has found another meal. A scared herdsman will bolt in with the news that the 'shere' has carried off his companion as they were driving out the communal cattle in broad daylight; for the man-eating tiger loses the habits of the more reputable of his kind, and seeks his prey at any hour of the twenty-four.

A man-eating panther does all these things, and more. He is more cunning than the tiger, and that is saying a very great deal. But what chiefly makes him so terrible a scourge is his almost incredible boldness. He has no respect for nor fear of human beings or human habitations. He will cheerfully enter a house where half a dozen people are sleeping, and, quite unperturbed by the alarm raised by the others, will seize and drag out a child, or even a woman, to devour at his leisure. Indeed,

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on occasion, if he can find no other way in, he will effect an entrance by tearing through the thatched roof. Nor at times can he be held guiltless of killing for the sake of killing. A really bad man-eating panther has been known to make his way into a hut and deliberately kill everyone of the inmates on exactly the same principle as a fox in a chicken-run. Finally, the beast will teach his progeny to follow in his own wicked ways ; and unless the whole line is extirpated, a district may continue indefinitely to suffer wholesale depredations, involving the loss of hundreds of lives.

My own experience of the blatant contempt of a man-eating panther for the human race occurred in a native state to the south of the Central Provinces. I had received a permit to shoot in State territory, and an urgent request came along from the rajah to see what I could do towards ridding the land of one of these evil-doers, which was terrorising something like two hundred square miles of country. It had an evil record, this beast, dating back over a couple of years or so, in the course of which it had claimed some 150 victims. Latterly its depredations had become—there is no other word for it—appalling. Accordingly I went into camp on the outskirts of a largish village, where the local thana, or police-station, formed a convenient centre for the collection of information regarding the movements of the man-eater. Every two or three days news came in of a woman or child having been killed and eaten. The beast rarely, if ever, touched a man, or if it did, I never heard of it. All these kills, however, were reported from villages some fifteen or twenty miles from where I was, and successive reports would come from places perhaps twenty or thirty miles apart. The brute was ranging over a big beat, and it was little use going after him. The only thing to do was

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to possess my soul in patience until such time as the mountain came to Mahomet, or, at any rate, within reasonable distance of him.

The outlook was anything but the hopeful one which I in my innocence had at first imagined it would be. But there was nothing to be done but wait. In the meantime the whole countryside was scared thoroughly stiff. By day or night no one moved abroad alone. Now and again I used to meet parties of ten or fifteen, all armed with axes, making their way from one place to another, and keeping a wary eye on both sides of the road as they went. As these people were Gonds, this state of affairs meant a great deal. To begin with, the Gond is an eminently plucky individual in himself. Then he has the contempt born of the familiarity of a lifetime with the beasts of the jungle. And if a panther can throw the Gond inhabitants of some 200 square miles of territory into a state of abject fright, it must be a very evil beast indeed. After I had been in camp some ten days I had my first brush with the man-eater, and he took all the honours of the round. One morning an unkempt individual was brought into my camp, who announced that the 'shaitan' had visited his house the previous night and attempted to carry off a small girl. Would the sahib give the matter his urgent and personal attention, and bring some medicine for the injured child? The sahib would, and as we went I heard the story of the attack.

It appeared that the girl was asleep in the middle of the hut, directly between the two doors. Near one door there was a group of three or four men sitting talking. Near the other, in the opposite wall of the hut, there was a single man whittling a stick for use as an axe-helve. Suddenly the panther bounded in through one

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door, past the group of conversationalists, picked up the child, and proceeded to walk out of the hut with her through the other door. The single man near the other door pluckily attacked the brute with the stick he was shaping. He managed to bring this unsatisfactory weapon hard down across the beast's hind-quarters, startling it into dropping its prey, and vanishing through the door into the night, to the accompaniment of a series of disappointed snarls. When we arrived at the village a mile away, I proceeded, so far as I could, to check the story. After a careful examination of the tracks, I came to the definite conclusion that it was correct in every detail. The panther had walked quietly up to the hut, and the scratches of its claws showed where it had made its bound through the front door. Other marks showed how it had picked up the child bodily, the drag of her heels along the ground alone being visible, and how it had dropped her when attacked by the man with the stick. The girl was torn about the throat, but not very badly. I dressed her wounds with carbolic, and up to the time I left that camp a fortnight or so later, she was doing well, and, I have no doubt, ultimately recovered.

The reputation of the panther left room for little hope that it would remain near the village. Accordingly I returned to my camp after a fruitless attempt to track the beast to its lying-up place, leaving word that any further developments were to be reported at once. As I expected, there were none, and two days later a kill was announced from a village miles away.

At the end of three weeks in that camp I was getting thoroughly tired of it. Day after day I scoured the neighbouring jungles for game, with a conspicuous lack of success. In the meantime reports of the man-eater's activities continued to come in, but they were all from

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different and widely-separated villages. Already the better part of a month of my hard-earned leave had been spent. The place where I was camping was undoubtedly convenient so far as getting the necessary khubbar of the panther was concerned. On the other hand, game was so scarce as to be to all intents and purposes non-existent. Keen though I was to shoot the man-eater, I could not spend the whole of my leave doing nothing in this way on the offchance of getting it, and as the days went on my hopes sank lower and lower. One day I returned thoroughly disgusted from my customarily unsuccessful morning round. While I was waiting for breakfast, the wish to move on elsewhere deepened into a fixed determination, and I decided to start getting ready to shift camp as soon as the meal was over. But the powers that be had decreed otherwise. I was in the middle of breakfast when a thoroughly scared urchin bolted in with the news that a panther had killed one of his companions as they were driving out the village cattle a couple of hours earlier. His shivering limbs and dirty grey colour were sufficient *prima facie* evidence of the truth of his story. He and three other small boys, he said, were driving out the cattle, when a panther suddenly bounded out of the jungle, seized one of the boys and dragged him off. The body was lying in the jungle, and would not be removed until I had arrived and inspected it.

I promptly set out for the scene of the tragedy four miles away. When I arrived at the village I was met by the headman and the father of the dead boy. The corpse was exactly as it had been found, they told me, so I went down to reconnoitre. The kill had taken place on the edge of a strip of jungle bordering a widish nullah. On the other side of the nullah was a similar strip, and

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neither was more than twenty or thirty yards wide. The body of the dead boy, who must have been about nine or ten years old, was lying in the middle of one strip under a mass of creeper forming a sort of tent about six feet square. As in the previous case of the girl, the panther had seized its victim by the throat, and, as far as I could judge, death must have been practically instantaneous. It remained now to settle with the murderer—I hoped once and for all. Beating was out of the question. Apart altogether from the likelihood of its attacking the beaters, the devilish cunning of the panther and the fact that it might be lying up anywhere in either of the strips of jungle made any prospect of getting a shot at it by beating extremely remote. If I was to have any reckoning with the slayer, it meant sitting up over the body of the slain. It was very far from being a pleasant idea, but it had to be faced. The first thing to do was to persuade the father. He wanted to remove the body at once for decent cremation. After a lot of argument, however, he allowed it to remain, and I set about making what preparations I could for my vigil.

Now the body was lying under this mass of creeper, and close to it was the only decent-sized tree there was within reasonable distance. Accordingly I had a charpoy hoisted into its branches, whence I thought I could get a good view of the corpse just below me, and, taking my rifle and a kukri, established myself for the wait. It was about two o'clock in the afternoon when I got settled down. I did not expect an extended vigil. The panther, however, thought otherwise, and it was practically dark by the time he arrived. I just saw a shape glide in under the mass of creeper without giving me the chance of a shot, and the sound of rending flesh indicated that he had started his meal.

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Then my troubles began. The corpse was lying under that mass of creeper with the panther tearing at it, and in the darkness I could see neither. There was no moon, and even if there had been, the opaque shadow of the creeper would still have been there. I waited for a long time, every minute expecting the beast to come out into the open, where I might get a chance at him. But he continued tearing at the body in a way that demonstrated very clearly that he was ravenous and had no intention of being interrupted until his hunger had been satisfied. Something had obviously to be done. Otherwise we might have remained as we were until morning. Eventually I decided to throw something down, in the hope that it might startle the man-eater into showing himself outside the shadow of the creeper. The only thing I could think of was my bunch of keys. Down they went, and I gripped my rifle steady for the expected shot ; but not a bit of it. The panther growled, walked once or twice round the corpse, still keeping under the creeper, and calmly returned to his meal.

This came as a revelation to me of the fearlessness of a hungry man-eating panther. But there were many more revelations to come that night. The fact that a bunch of keps dropping out of the sky with a metallic jingle close to the beast's head was insufficient to disturb him was astonishing enough. Accordingly I cast about for something more drastic, and decided to try clapping my hands. The first time or two the panther growled his acknowledgments, and did his little circumambulation. Then he got bored, and did not deign to pay any attention at all to my efforts. So I tried shouting at him, with equally unsuccessful results. Occasionally he growled back ; generally he did not bother to do that, even when I bawled at him with the full strength of my lungs. Now

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consider the ludicrousness of the position. Here on the machan was a man armed with a heavy rifle, and there below him, at a distance to be measured in feet, was the animal to shoot which he had expended so much time and trouble. But so far as getting a shot was concerned, those few feet might have been as many miles. If only the panther would show himself outside that six-feet-square patch of creeper—but it remained 'if only.' I was getting desperate by this time. Hacking off a branch with my kukri, I cut it up and hurled the pieces into the darkness below. The man-eater hardly troubled to growl back. Only one thing remained. I lifted my rifle and let drive into the middle of that infernal creeper, ripping another cartridge into the chamber as fast as I could work the bolt. The noise the shot made in the quiet jungle was extraordinary. My rifle was a .400 full-cordite, magazine one, and the seeming loudness of the report startled even me, used as I was to the weapon. But it did not disturb that panther—at least, not to the extent anyone would have expected. He gave a blood-curdling snarl or two, and I heard him walk around the body, keeping as always under the creeper. Then the noise of his feeding began again. Three more shots I fired, hurling down the empty cartridge-cases after each shot to the accompaniment of my shouted objurgations. Then I stopped abruptly. Never expecting anything of this nature, I had only brought ten rounds with me, and the realisation came very forcibly that I could not afford to waste any more of them on an entirely fruitless attempt to move a beast which had no intention of being moved.

I began to feel decidedly creepy. At the best the whole business had a very gruesome flavour about it; and when this amazing behaviour on the part of the panther came on top of everything else, all the local stories of the

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supernatural attributes credited to him began to come to mind. Cold clammy fingers began to tickle gently up and down my spine. In fact, not to put too nice a point on it, I was not very far from being in a state of what is commonly known as 'mortal funk.' It came as an immense relief, therefore, to hear human voices hailing me from the edge of the jungle. The villagers, hearing the shots, had come to the conclusion that the panther must be dead, and had come down in a body to hear all about it. I shouted back that the panther was very far from being dead, and that they had better clear out at once, advice which they lost no time in following.

The visit of the villagers had a soothing effect on nerves which, as I have said, were becoming more than a trifle strained. After they had departed, I dozed off, and the doze deepened into sleep. Just after one o'clock I snapped into sudden and complete wakefulness, and the realisation that the man-eater was clawing at the foot of my tree. I looked over the edge of the machan, but though the moon had risen, he was in the shadow and was invisible to me. I felt profoundly uncomfortable. The earlier behaviour of the brute had already instilled in my mind an intense respect for his uncanny contempt of my efforts to terminate his existence, not untinged, I admit, with a touch of superstitious awe. It may sound curious—to use no stronger term—that a man, armed with a rifle and perched on a machan some ten feet from the ground, should be scared by a large cat clawing at the foot of the tree in which he was situated. But this was no ordinary panther. It was so many cubic feet of concentrated activity, cunning, courage, deadly viciousness and utter contempt for the human race. Moreover, the whole circumstances of the vigil had been of a gruesomeness calculated to tax the strongest of nerves. I

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grabbed my kukri and made ready to smite as soon as the panther should make its appearance over the edge of the machan, which I expected every moment. However, after a few minutes, and very much to my relief, it moved off. Looking back on things, I have come to the conclusion that the panther was only cleaning its claws by scraping them up and down the bark of the tree. Still, at the time I was very far from realising that, and the sound of the animal's retreating footsteps was one of the things in my life for which I have felt most devoutly grateful. Another thing which I have often wondered, is whether the choice of my tree for those manicuring operations was not a deliberate act on the part of the panther to show his contempt for me. He knew well enough that I was in that tree. He must have realised that I had designs on his life. And he cared not one atom, except in so far as he consistently declined to come out into the open and to give me the chance of a shot at him.

I remained very much on the alert for the rest of the night, expecting him back at any moment. It was nearly four o'clock, however, before I heard him again. Keeping in the shadow the whole way, he slid in under the patch of creeper, and for ten minutes or so the sound of his feeding went on. Then he left again, this time, as it turned out, for good.

I was not feeling too happy. In the first place, the night had been an unholy one. But what was worse was the knowledge that I had to face the father of the dead boy in the morning. That, I think, was the least pleasing part of a wholly unpleasant business. At dawn I heard the villagers coming down, and stiffly descended from my machan. The sight was a horrible one. Only the hands and feet of the corpse remained. The rest was a litter of broken bones and fragments of flesh. The boy's father

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said never a word. He cast one look of unutterable reproach at me, gathered up the hands and feet, and walked quietly away, looking neither to the right nor to the left. It was a bad moment, and the memory of it has given me many bad moments since.

We made an attempt to track the panther in case he might be lying up in the neighbourhood. So far as we could gather, however, he seemed to have gone clean off across country, and after a mile or so of difficult tracking we had to give it up. There was obviously no prospect of seeing him again in that village, for the time being at any rate.

I came to the definite conclusion after this that the panther was not fated to die by my hand, and a day or two later I moved my camp to another village some ten miles away, where there was a chance of getting some of the shooting I had come for and hitherto had not got. Just before dawn on the second night after my arrival I was awakened by something bumping into my tent just behind my head as I lay in bed. I slept very lightly in those days: the presence in the district of the man-eater did not encourage heavy slumber, any more than it encouraged me to go to bed without my rifle and kukri ready to hand. There was a gentle scratching just outside the tent, and then two long sniffs. The hair started to bristle up at the back of my neck, and the palms of my hands became suddenly very cold and clammy. There was no mistaking the identity of the animal outside. It was a panther all right, and in the circumstances it could only be the man-eater. I grabbed my rifle and the kukri, determined to sell my life as dearly as possible, and awaited developments. Just then there was a shout outside. With the approaching dawn my camp was awakening into life, and one of my entourage was calling

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to the bhisti in the village to bring water for the preparation of my chota hazri. The scratching ceased, and I heard the intruder moving off. There was no undignified hurry about his retreat. Judging from the sound, his attitude was that he was leaving because he wanted to, and not because he was frightened into doing so. After a discreet interval I got up, and as soon as it was light enough examined carefully the ground around my tent. The whole position was very soon cleared up. The nocturnal visitor was the man-eater, sure enough. He had prowled once or twice around the tent, evidently trying to make up his mind what it was. A tentative scratch or two in the ground just outside showed where he had tried a closer investigation of the queer object which obviously contained a desirable meal, but which might at the same time have been a trap. My follower's mercifully opportune shout had apparently decided him that the chances of running into danger were too great to make an entrance worth while, and he had accordingly moved off with dignity. To this day I am firmly convinced that the man-eater was suspicious that the tent was a trap of some sort. If it had not been for that, he would certainly have come in, and the chances of my being alive at the present time would not have been worth considering. Even now the memory of those two long sniffs induces a rather creepy feeling around my spine.

The sands of the man-eater's existence were, however, rapidly running out. Three days later a Gond villager turned up at my camp with an old Tower musket and the skin of a fine panther which he had shot in his compound the previous night. As I prefer to shoot my own trophies, I was not at first interested in the prospective deal; but when he produced two things which he found in the

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animal's stomach, my attitude changed. The things he showed me were a black ball, which on closer inspection proved to consist of human hair, and a silver anklet. There was no mistaking the identity of the panther after that. This was the skin of the man-eater which had taken all the honours of our three encounters, and incidentally given me some of the worst moments I have had in a fairly extended experience of big game shooting in India. Glad as I was that the land had been rid of the pest, the manner of its death was rather a blow to my pride. After making an arrant fool of a sahib armed with modern weapons of destruction, who had devoted more than a month to an effort to compass its end, the man-eater had fallen to a charge of nondescript missiles fired by a simple savage from a gas-pipe, which from its appearance threatened greater danger to its user than to the intended victim. But that was just one of the practical jokes which the gods of the jungle delight in playing as an antidote to sinful human pride.

The way in which the work of destruction had been accomplished was too beautifully simple. The Gond told me that a panther had come into his compound and killed one of his goats. He had frightened the animal away and ensconced himself in the door of his hut waiting for its return. It had duly returned, to be dropped dead by an assorted mixture of slugs, nails and heaven knows what besides, fired from the old muzzle-loader at a range of five yards. Had this stalwart realised the identity of the beast he had sat up for, I have little doubt that he would never have waited for it as he did. All the characteristic pluck of the Gond notwithstanding, the man-eater had established its reign of terror far too firmly throughout the country for any of the local inhabitants to tackle it single-handed in this way. But

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the villager did not realise what he was doing, and the result was that one of the most cunning and most ruthless of all beasts in the Indian jungle had walked up to its death like any ordinary goat-killer. The whole thing was astonishing enough; but what has always puzzled me most of all is the way in which the panther consented to be driven off its kill. It had no fear of human beings, and its record showed that it preferred them for edible purposes to the normal food of its kind. Yet the man-eater, which had declined to be frightened off its kill by my missiles, shouted objurgations and rifle-shots, permitted itself to be driven off from a goat by the voice of an unarmed villager.

I bought the skin as a memento, and the Gond was delighted with the ten rupees he received for it. The panther was a large male, and, so far as it was possible to judge from the skin, in fine condition. One might have expected to find that the beast was an old and mangy one, but it was not. The skin was a beauty, and the claws did not suggest that their late possessor was in any way getting on in years. Nor were there any signs of a previous injury which might have accounted for the animal's original embarkation on its extended career of human destruction. To my lasting regret, I did not get the skull. It is possible that defective teeth may have accounted for its horrible proclivities. Failing that, the only explanation which suggests itself to me is that the panther acquired the taste for human flesh at an early age, having been educated to it by one of its parents which had been a man-eater before it.

As there was the possibility of a reward being forthcoming for the destruction of the panther, I wrote to the State Durbar giving the name of the man who had killed it, the circumstances of the shooting and details of the

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evidence that the dead animal was the dreaded man-eater. Whether the villager got his reward I never discovered. I certainly heard nothing more so far as that side of the matter was concerned. Long after, however, I learned that the panther's depredations had come to a sudden end at a time which coincided with the bringing of the skin to me. That removed any possible doubt there may have been that the skin I bought then, and still have, at one time belonged to one of the worst pests with which that particular part of India has ever been cursed.

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XVI.

"BEEF."

'BEEF,' in our Nigerian pidgin, means any non-human animal that is alive. It includes birds; thus we speak—those of us that having learned English are interpreters—of 'dan small beef lib for hup,' when we mean a flighting duck, for instance. 'Beef' is equivalent to *Fauna*, which is a learned high-brow sort of word, not even pidgin English. Very well, then. In what follows we will stick to 'Beef.'

Being 'Beef' in Nigeria means a rather worried life with plenty of exercise. If you are a lion you have got to watch out for—

(*a*) The District Officer.
(*b*) The occasional European.
(*c*) Wily native with Dane gun.
(*d*) Still more artful native with bow and arrow.
(*e*) Deep pits with sharpened stakes, points up, stuck in the bottom.

Similarly if you are a leopard or a hyæna. Elephant and rhino and giraffe need to pay special attention to (*a*), (*b*) and (*c*). Bush-cow and roan and water-buck and the other antelope and the gazelles have other 'Beef' as well as humans planning them harm. It is not all peace and plenty and happy days being a member of the Honourable Society of Nigerian Fauna.

Generally, with us, 'Beef' gives the hunter nothing for

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nothing. There is plenty of stuff up and down the country, but the country is big, and there are people pretty well all over it, so that the ' Beef ' is kept moving. This means that it is shy and quick off the mark. I reckon that each head I got cost me, say, sixty miles of walking, not easy walking either.

The conditions are thus quite different from those on the other side of the Continent, where, it is said, the shooter sits under a tree, and his orderly rouses him up and tells him when a beast with a decent head comes along in the procession that is constantly passing.

A little, flat-faced, beady-eyed fellow, name of Dabchir, used to take me shooting in the beginning. He began by surrounding his proceedings with just as much mystery and in-the-darkness as a ghillie at home uses in his profession. He soon dropped it. Of Dabchir's mental processes it is not possible for me to say anything : perhaps he did not have any. He was a great traveller, and he moved quickly. He was quite fearless. I have seen him crawl to within forty yards of elephant, in open bush, and attack one of the several feeding thereabouts, pooping off at his selection with a Dane gun—a Dane gun being a ramshackle flint-locked contrivance of iron gas-pipe, timber and wire, out of which, by means of a lot of black powder, a small heavily poisoned harpoon was discharged.

The harpoon killed by virtue of the poison with which it was anointed, and the quarry usually died later on, some distance away. Dabchir's part, having once got the engine into position and discharged it, was to lie still until the elephant went away. He used to say that elephant and rhino might just as well be blind for all the use their eyes are : that their hearing and smelling senses perform the seeing function in addition.

He came to me one day at Gurkawa with great stories of

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water-buck, and insisted on my quitting work to go after the game. On this occasion he had left the Dane gun at home, and was equipped with a little bow, a quiver fitted with poisoned arrows, a knife and a chopper; and he wore a goatskin draped about him kilt fashion. Dabchir walked in front, and we occupied the illimitable uninhabited bush.

Imagine an orchard gone to seed: small shabby trees sparsely scattered, many of them leafless, all of them grey and tinder-dry; brown the earth, parched and seamed with cracks; frequent wet-weather tracks of elephant, giraffe, bush-cow, lion, pig and antelope, great and small, gazelle also. Everything that passed this way during the rains has left its signature. There is a distant grey haze and a grey sky. The air is over-dry, and now and again carries the sharp smell of burning timber. The bush fires have burned off the elephant-grass and most of the undergrowth. That is the Gurkawa bush in January. It runs about a hundred and fifty miles by fifty, and one of the longer sides lies along the Binue River; otherwise, except in the rains, the area is waterless.

We had gone a goodish way without seeing any 'Beef,' so presently I up and said to Dabchir, "What about it?"

And he replied, "We are nearly at the place."

And I for the moment walked carelessly, so that I trod on a twig that snapped like a pistol-shot. And we stopped, and looked, and listened.

A short dozen yards ahead of us something khaki-coloured moved, a something of some size. And alongside that another khaki-coloured something did likewise. I continued to stand and look and listen; so did friend Dabchir. I noticed an arrow in his bow, and my .276 slipped to the ready. Came a cough-grunt noise—and

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another of the same. And a most unpleasing, overpowering, horrible smell or stench, as we realised that my stumbling had aroused from sleep Mr Lion and his lady wife, taking their ease on the scene of a kill.

The four of us stayed at gaze. I do not think that Dabchir or I made any sound, and I am sure we neither of us yawned. Certainly our *vis-à-vis* yawned, ***and*** waggled their tails—no sign of friendliness this in the greater *felidæ*. And then our opposite numbers sprang away and were gone. Dabchir flicked an arrow, and I let drive—misses both ; and we stood silent in the stillness alongside the hateful hideous heap of stinking offal that only yesterday was a giraffe. I had never seen a lion before, out of the Zoo.

On the next occasion I saw the gent before he spotted us. We were after hartebeest ; there was a small herd of them that we were trying to work up to. A lion was similarly occupied, and so full of the matter in hand that he did not see us until it was too late. In fact I do not think that he saw us at all, as he came broadside on and dropped in his tracks without a grunt to a bullet that took him in the shoulder.

Dabchir got into trouble over that lion for stealing its whiskers and several claws. Our West African lion generally has a very poor mane, so his skin is not much to look at when it is off him : *sans* whiskers and claws it is less than that. Natives are incorrigible in this matter of raping the claws and whiskers from lion and leopard. They cannot resist the bristles on an elephant's tail either. Great virtue pertains to all these things, and it is almost more trouble preserving them from your servants than it is getting the owner-wearers in the first instance.

My small friend had a good deal of hunters' lore. How much of it was of any worth I cannot say. It certainly

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interested me when he yarned it off. There are not many topics upon which a bushman of his sort *can* converse with a bushman of mine. One of his *dicta* was that when after a lion it behoves the hunter *not* to go for a male until he has satisfied himself that his lady is not anywhere handy. If she is, and anything happens to her mate, she will attack. But you may at any time open on a lioness without fear of interference. Her mate, if he is close by, will run away and leave her to it ; if he is far off, he will stay so.

" Perhaps, and again, perhaps not," was, I remember, my comment on this.

Then about leopard. Dabchir said a leopard, tree-climber though he is, will not attempt a *kuka*-tree, which is a stumpy, smooth, grey-barked thing of enormous girth—soft and spongy under the rind. Reason : because lumps of the wood come away under his claws and let him down.

One evening my dogs started a leopard when I was out looking for guinea-fowl. Leopard shot up a tree, *not* a kuka, and presently, having taken two lots of No. 5 shot from about six yards' distance, fell to the ground, a perfectly good leopard, as he was very dead indeed.

Another of Dabchir's *dicta* was that a leopard could not, nor would one try to, climb a tree that was slender and straight-stemmed and branchless. Reason : that he walks and scrambles up, and cannot swarm up. I once tested this, *not* out of curiosity, but sheerly *faute de mieux*. A large cock-leopard met me late one afternoon on a lonely bush-path, caught me, as the Canadians used to say in France, with my braces adrift, in that the deadliest and only lethal thing I had about me was a foul old pipe. I hastily marked down the nearest thing to a slim, straight-stemmed, branchless tree in those parts, sidled alongside,

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and shot up it. Leopard and his missus came and padded round twenty feet below, until, an hour later, the siege was raised by some police who arrived and opened fire on the pair.

A leopard, though so much smaller than a lion, seems vastly more dangerous—*game* is the word some folks use. Wounded, he is a terror, and will always go for his assailant, whereas usually a wounded lion tries to get away. Most of lion casualties, I think, occur when a wounded lion is being followed up. You never need to follow up a wounded leopard : you do not get the chance.

Native hunters always carry amulets—*contra* lion, *contra* bush-cow, *contra* leopard, and so on—and have real faith in them. The amulet, by the way, is good only against *one* of these, so a hunter carries a bunch of them strung about him. This makes easier the explaining of a casualty when one occurs, and is also good for trade—the amulet-monger's trade : he sells more amulets.

I remember arriving at a riverside landing after dark, and wondering that nobody came from the village a mile inland to ' salute ' me. Ultimately a lean, almost naked person did arrive, and apologised for the absence of the ' king ' and others, all, he explained, barricaded in their huts. For several days past, he said, a man-eating lion had nightly invaded the village, and each time got away with something, human or stock. During the day the beast lay up in the elephant-grass nearby.

As the messenger had just walked a mile in the dark alone through the grass, I asked him if he was not afraid, and he said no. The lion could not hurt him—first, because he was a professional hunter ; and second, because he had the appropriate charm. I offered the lad to dine and sleep in my little steamer, but he said he would rather be getting home ; and with that he took himself off for

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another mile walk alone through the elephant-grass in the dark.

Dabchir believed that no normal lion went man-eating. He said that it was only old lions, unable by reason of bodily infirmity to get antelope, or mangy lions ostracised on that account by their fellows, or lions with smashed canine tooth or teeth, that bother the human. I have had the heads of several man-eaters through my hands, and in each one there was damage to the canine teeth. Mange renders a lion solitary; he cannot go hunting with three or four others—has to fend for himself. It may be that Dabchir was right about the man-eaters.

A hornbill is a big, ugly, unhappy-looking bird, stalks about alone, his gait a jerky strut, his enormous heavy beak seeming often to get the better of his neck muscles, and so drags his head down with a bump. In movement, he is astonishingly like those jointed wooden dolls that are actuated by a weight at the end of a swinging cord.

Now Dabchir slew one of these creatures, and I fancy that therein he offended against some Nigerian law. And he took and stuffed its upper part, head and neck. He acquired a strip of black cloth two feet wide and four feet long. He made a hole about a foot from one end of it. He slipped this cloth over his head, so that the shorter end hung before. He fixed the relic of hornbill to a small wooden block and fastened it to his forehead with a strip of cloth. Then he dropped on all fours and perked about in the grass in the manner of a hornbill. From a little distance it was a wonderfully convincing performance.

Not altogether satisfied that the contraption and imitation would deceive an antelope, I went one day to see. We came to a *fadama*, an island of dried swamp in the surrounding bush, and there marked a dozen hartebeest feeding bang-out in the open some six hundred yards away.

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With bow and arrows Dabchir slipped away what time I stayed doggo in the scrub and through glasses watched the little man give a really delightful display of movement from cover to cover. Even with the glasses it soon became difficult to keep on Mr Dabchir, and I presently stopped trying, and fixed on the hartebeest, relying on them to give me his position. This they did an hour later by galloping off: all but one of them, though he was the first away. As the second arrow took him, he spurted, checked almost immediately, stumbled, came down on his knees, was up and on again, then crashed, with Dabchir hard on him. He did not get a hundred yards altogether.

I got up in time to see Dabchir cutting out his arrows. Heavily poisoned though they were, cutting away parts immediately surrounding the wounds left the carcase good and safe to eat. So Dabchir said, and he and his friends ate all there was, barring horns, hoofs, hide and the larger bones, without suffering any ill-effects other than those which normally supervene when your native gets loose at meat: he eats till it is all gone. Thus two men will take longer to eat a sheep than twelve men will, but the pair will make it an affair of one sitting, and it will be just as clean a job as if the dozen had tackled it.

The little man was well within thirty yards when he let go his first arrow, and he had been hornbilling close about the 'Beef' for ten minutes then. A clever bit of work. With us hartebeest are not easily approached in the open.

Fadama, dried swamp of greater or less extent, from a couple of acres to two thousand, level, with the grass burned off, is perfectly abominable going: holes and cracks in the ground, tussocks and booby-traps of all sorts. One such near Gassol was the scene of my only attempt at pig-sticking. My friend, Tafi da Issa, chief of

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Gassol, produced a mixed lot of ponies and spears and retainers, and off we went. The country ponies are all entire, and squealing, biting, fighting, undersized frauds. The spears were, some of them, fishing spears ; others of them ordinary fighting spears ; others again ceremonial ones. I had a stout fishing spear, with plenty of barbs to it.

' The idear '—mine—was to leave the spear at once in the very first pig it hit. We saw lots of pigs, the big heavy-tusked sort, and galloped no end, and curiously enough nobody broke his neck. We did not get any pig, but we did get a fine, breezy, merry hour charging about that *fadama*, and a score or more of those hogs must have got the fright of their lives.

Tafi da Issa at that time was middle-aged—elderly, turbaned, baggy-trousered, heavily gowned. As a young man he was widely known as the local Nimrod through all that countryside. Sitting with me one night in my tiny stern-wheeler, he bared his right thigh and discovered a brawny limb that was laced with scar tissue till it looked like a map.

" That," he said, " was done by a *mesa*."

Now *mesa* is the name we have for python, a great beast of the constrictor sort, non-poisonous, that grows to twenty feet and over, eats small children, small antelope, small mammals generally, lives in swamp, and spends a good deal of his time in water. Sometimes he will snatch his prey at the water's edge and drag it in. Issa went on : " It's years ago, and I was a young man, not a chief, just a hunter. One day in the *fadama* I shot a ' Beef,' and, as a good Moslem, dashed up and cut its throat. The sun was high, and the blood gushed out and smelled. I was busy about the carcase when something struck me, and I fell, losing my knife, which dropped out of my reach. A big

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mesa had me by the leg. I expect the smell of the blood had brought him. I had to kill the brute, and quickly, and I was weaponless. I thrust my thumbs into his eyes and so into his brain, and he died."

Now a python's teeth are so arranged in his head, sloping back towards his innards, that once he has bitten on to anything he *cannot* let go. So I asked Issa, not altogether accepting his tale—

" And when the snake was dead ? "

And he said—

" I stretched and strained and struggled. The snake was very big and heavy, and I was in pain, and presently I got to my knife. Then I cut the head off the thing, and the body fell away. After that I cut through the joining of its jaws and lifted the two out of my thigh."

Stout fellow, Tafi da Issa.

Our hill-dwelling pagans go a-hunting down on the plains in January and February. The male humans between the ages of apparently six and sixty-six, with pie-dogs innumerable, sally forth at a little before the dawning. The day before the meet, people go out with long nets like seines, and rig these about in the line of country they are going to drive. Save that the hunters range themselves in a long flat crescent, it is a go-as-you-please affair, this hunting. The few that have ponies bring them out—tiny, rough, little beasts, with a strip of hide for bridle, no bit nor stirrups, nor any saddle. In lieu of this last, owners remove a slip of hide, twelve inches by two, from the poor beast's back, and this place they carefully keep fresh and sore with a stick or otherwise. They say that this raw surface makes an excellent seat !

Everybody and his dog pound along as hard as they can. They carry bows and poisoned arrows and clubs and spears,

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and with the dogs make no end of a bobbery. It sounds like a battle. Anything from a rat to a bush-cow is game, and they generally manage to put up one or two of the big cats. I have seen these hunts come sweeping through a village, roan and cob and gazelle and hartebeest flying ahead, some trying to jump the walls, others staggering and falling exhausted. Some get caught in the nets, and these are speared and clubbed from life into meat. If they get a leopard he generally manages to damage a number of the hunters before he himself receives the knockout. More than once I have had the dressing of wounded hunters. Leopard makes horrid marks on anyone he gets within reach of.

Years ago three elephants got right off their beat, wandering up the Shemunkar River. The local pagan had never seen elephant before, and it was not the hunting season ; but several tons of good eating he was not going to miss, nor did he. It was the story of Gulliver and Lilliput over again. And when I, a European, being thereabouts as familiar an object as an elephant, visited the area not long afterwards, the people were anxious to learn from me whether more elephants were coming, and, if not, where they could be got.

Bokkos is in a congested district, and annually there is a famine period. The country is grassy uplands, with rocks outcropping all about. Not a tree for miles, and no game at all. Leopards there are, and some rats and an occasional rock-rabbit ; lizards also, and once every seven years an antelope that has strayed from goodness knows where. It was a seventh year the last time I was in the place.

These disadvantages notwithstanding, the men of Bokkos and their dogs—the sorriest-looking pie-dogs in all Africa, and the pie-dog is never a happy, hearty beast—

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go forth to get what they can. In a poor lot these Bokkos pies are the poorest. Patchy sore-looking curs, tails drooping, ribs sticking out, they slink snapping through life about forty-eight hours behind the last scrap of offal. Nevertheless, anything the Bokkos pack puts up is doomed, rat or rabbit or lizard. The long line of hungry hunters sweeps on and on, firing the grass as it goes, a perfect pandemonium of noise and smoke, and runs the quarry down, be it what it may. There is no escape ; its day has come.

One day this outfit found a ' Beef,' a hartebeest, no less, and ran after it for many hours. The creature was all in when it stumbled into the midst of the Tummot pack, a similar crowd, also hunting hungrily. These slew the hartebeest right in sight of the Bokkos men, who rushed forward with angry cries and started hammering the killers.

All this within a mile of a small mining camp, where the miners, a brace of excellent ' Aussies,' sat tight and had a good view. There was nothing else for them to do. The affair developed into a regular battle, and it was only the oncoming of night and heavy rain that put a stop to the affray, causing the peace-loving hunters and their dogs to turn up the battle and go home. Happening along the next morning, I forgathered with the ' Aussies,' and from them learned that there was much more human blood than hartebeest blood shed there that day.

Riding on my way, I came on a pair of Ancients, spear in hand, vigilant upon a rock-slab. I passed the time of day politely, and asked them what they did in that place. And they, answering, said, " A lizard has gone in under this rock ; we await its coming out." Poor devils : they looked so old and tired and hungry.

There used to be a great pool alongside the Gombe

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road: in the rains the deepest part of a vast stretch of flooded country, and in the dry season, since the memory of man ran not to the contrary, a big lake—until 1914, that is.

The pool was home for a number of hippo, and when in that year of drought the water-level sank lower and ever lower, these moved out and trekked miles across country to the river, and so passed out of this narrative. But two conservative old things, the Gombe Die-Hards, stayed, and at the last met a sticky, muddy end. When the water had all gone there remained mud, deep, caked a-top, miles of it, and the brace of last-ditchers stuck fast therein and perished miserably.

What was called 'the Ningi Bush' possessed a great reputation as an area where 'Beef' of all sorts abounded. People who had never been within hundreds of miles of it told you what a shooter's paradise was there. The few men who had skirted it or passed a day or two in it said the same—game tracks everywhere, and reports from every native and at every village of 'Beef' seen last night or that morning. The thing was a regular shibboleth. I subscribed to it, like everybody else, my betters. And when the day came for me to be sent up to Ningi to do a job of work, people congratulated me and advised as to guns.

At the small town of Ningi I found established a very good fellow, a mine prospector. He was an excellent shikari, and he had been in Ningi a year. And when he told me there was precious little to shoot in the Ningi Bush, I did not believe him.

Well, I spent three months there, in the best shooting time, and natives told me the usual tales about stuff they had seen. But it was always 'Beef' yesterday and 'Beef' to-morrow—never 'Beef' to-day. I covered the whole area, and saw every village and native; there are plenty

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of both in it. I saw elephant-tracks and droppings, of *one* elephant, *once*, and the beast had evidently been moving fast; he was not staying in the Ningi Bush. Of other game I saw none, nor signs of any, except a very few wet-weather tracks months old. A lion came and barked round my camp one night, a wet night, which I remember very well on account of a grand *battue* of scorpions. When we made camp in the forenoon it was on a bit of fallow, and an acre of this was roughly cleaned with hoes. I sleep always with a light, and was roused in the small hours by a scratting noise. Outside the rain was falling softly but steadily.

I did not skip out of bed sudden-like. One learns not to in the Tropics. I sat up and had a look-see. The ground-sheet was crawling with scorpions, literally alive with them. Inside that 10 ft. by 8 ft. tent we killed thirty-seven. My two ponies tethered outside were stung. The personal staff was wandering about with blazing brands, lamenting. All the scorpions in Ningi seemed to have come to see us. The morning's hoeing had opened up their little homes; then the rain had flooded them out, and they came away to the light, seeking the dry.

Still, one lion does not make a game reserve, and scorpions do not count at all.

The explanation of the Ningi myth, I take it, is simply that a limited area of light bush fringed about with farms and villages lay not far from a main road. Any 'Beef' that did show up was chased about, and in the course of twenty-four hours was seen and reported by scores of natives from dozens of places. Simply that and nothing more. But the shibboleth lived, and I daresay is going strong to-day, though it is nine or ten years since I battled with the Ningi scorpions

Kona is a dull dirty dump of thatched mud huts in the

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midst of the bush alongside the path that writhes from Lau to Jalingo. Two of the huts are the Rest Camp. I was sitting in one of them, and outside the rain was falling. Some was falling inside as well, but one must not expect too much of a second year native-made thatch ; besides, Nigeria is always Nigeria.

Appeared at the door of my hut a little crowd of dripping natives, all pretty well naked, save a great bull of a fellow in a red gown and trousers and turban, who carried a dreadful large club in his right hand and held the free end of a rope in his left. At the other end of this string was a male savage, with one wrist trussed up under his chin. The man in red was what we call a *Dogari*—Dogberry translates the word quite well—a policeman of the native administration. To this person I said ' Good-morning,' and he replied in one of the fifty or sixty Nigerian languages that I do *not* speak. So Umoru, the man of many tongues, was sent for.

The lad on the string, it appeared, was a murderer, his name Kapbakada, which seems to fit. He had stuck a poisoned spear into the arm of his brother, Bermatu, and so slain that one. The damp and shivering savages not on strings were witnesses. All came in out of the rain, and the Court (myself) proceeded to *avizandum.* An old gentleman, who gave his name as Kindau, swore on a knife that he would tell no lies, and then said he was the prisoner's father. Also he claimed to be father to the deceased Bermatu.

" A few days ago," he said, " I, with my two sons and a number of friends, went out to hunt. We all had poisoned spears. These people here are some of the friends who came with us. In the middle of the morning we saw a leopard and followed it. It went into a cave in a hill. We went in after it. The entrance was a low narrow

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passage, and we had to go in single file. Deceased was in front ; behind him the prisoner. Very soon we came on the leopard. It was dark in the cave, but we could see its eyes, and it was making noises. So we started to come back out of the cave. Deceased was the last out, and he hurried rather, so that he ran on to the spear of the man in front of him. When we got out he fell down and soon died."

By the Court. " Is it customary in your country so to hunt leopards ? "

Answer. " Yes, when there is nothing else to go after."

And the old man proceeded—

" There is no *dogari* in our village, but they have one at Pello, two days' walk from us. So we took the prisoner to Pello, and the *dogari* tied him up and told us we must all come with him, and here we are."

The curious thing is that the story told by the old gentleman was strictly true ; and so Kapbakada was loosed from the string, and presently, a free man, character unstained, set off on the five days' walk homewards with his father and the friends and the *dogari*.

If I were asked to explain what was in the minds of these people when they so single-filed into a dark *cul-de-sac* after a leopard, I would give it up. They eat leopard, of course, just as they eat dead horse or anything else. Some time ago an aged sick pony covered with sores, the property of a wandering juggler-tumbler-musician named Turlutu, lay down and died alongside my camp. I sent up the hill and asked the ' king ' to bring some people down and bury it. The thing was stinking hard when I found it.

The ' king ' came, and presently I was told he wanted a word with me. He said, might he and the elders *eat* the carcase instead of wasting it in a hole in the ground? I said I had no objection, provided the feast started *ek dum*.

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I did ask him and his friends how they could stand the smell, let alone sit down beside it and eat the stinking filth. The answer I have never forgotten—" Food never smells unpleasantly," they said.

The Pardam folk are a small, weakly and unwarlike community, who suffered much at the hands of some cannibal neighbours. I was able to make things a little easier for them, and went my ways loaded with their thanks. Six months later they sent a deputation to ask that I would turn the cannibals on to their town to deal with droves of baboons that hunted them off the farms and ravaged and spoiled them, thereby preparing a famine. The big dog-faced monkey, with forty or fifty of his relations in company, is a dangerous visitor.

Trekking along through the hills one morning we became aware of strange noises. Umoru and I went on to have a look. The noises were getting louder—very ugly, unpleasant, angry, threatening noises. All explained by a bunch of baboons after a leopard, which they had bayed in an open rocky place at the foot of a cliff. There they dealt with him very efficiently as we watched, pounded, smashed and tore him utterly. " That's one less," I remarked to Umoru as we trotted on our way.

The game-pit digger is a nuisance, and a danger, and a nasty fellow, and I have always sought, when opportunity offered, to induce him to occupy his time in some other way. He sites his pits all over the place ; except himself, nobody knows where they are, and he never fills one in. As it takes Nature some hundreds of years to remedy his neglect, we have here yet another instance of the evil men do living after them.

The commonest catch in a game-pit is snakes ; and the sight of a cobra or a puff-adder sitting all unmerry down at the bottom amongst the spikes twelve feet below the

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surface, almost reconciles one to the activities of the game-pit engineer.

The Montol people eat them. Once I was trailing along a bush-path with a malefactor whose catching had cost no end of trouble. The string was a bit slack, and the fellow suddenly dived down. He was so quick that I hardly saw what he did, but he got a four-foot black snake by the tail, swung it round a time or two, and biffed its head against a tree. Not, however, before the brute had spat in his face, and as a spot of the venom went in an eye, my malefactor was purblind for several days. This did not, however, prevent him from cooking and eating the snake, nor from extracting certain fat or oil from it, which he swopped with my orderly for tobacco. I forget what the oil was to ward off, but it was something pretty serious.

To return to game-pits. I had to make a boundary between two village areas; and the 'king' of one, an unpleasant troublesome fellow, whom I more than suspected of having freshly game-pitted the path by which I entered his domain, was all unwillingly showing me round. We were going through a patch of bush which was part of the disputed territory, and I am glad to say that the 'king' disappeared suddenly, completely and all unimperially into one of his own pits. We were walking side by side when he did it.

It was quite a shock to all of us, and my nerves at any rate were not soothed by the dismal wailing noise that came from the pit. However, it was an old pit, and the spikes in the bottom had decayed away, nor was there a single snake there. So 'King' Dungdep suffered no serious hurt. Before he was hauled up he said, with every appearance of sincerity, that he would have the whole village out that very day and fill in every single game-pit.

I hope he implemented that undertaking.

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